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SOCIAL EVILS,

AND

Their Remedy.

BY

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"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

"The kingdom of God is like leaven."

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VOL. II.

THE PASTOR OF DRONFELLS.
THE LABOURER AND HIS WIFE.

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ADDRESS.

I AM not a politician, nor do I belong to any political party: my own station is a country parish, and I seldom pass its boundaries. However, in the Periodical Work I am now publishing, I would go forth through the land on a mission of high importance, holding up the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as the great remedy of Social Evils. I hope to be admitted into many a household circle, and to be allowed at least a hearing. My mission relates not only to the happiness of "the life that now is," but to the highest interests of man,—to the life and death of the immortal spirit; and I do not come as a trifler, but as one bearing and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.

I do not meddle with the question, whether the Gospel is, or is not, the remedy for evils in the organization of society; but I do assert, that it will introduce a new spirit even into a badly organized society, and thus make it superior to the most admirable organization without that spirit.

As it is with the human body, so it is with the body politic. It is not the province or proper office of religion to restore to symmetry and to beauty the deformed figure, but to introduce the graces of a renewed spirit within that deformed figure, and thus to impart even to the unshapen, and the coarse featured, a charm for which we may vainly search, where the proportions of the form are in exquisite symmetry, and the features beautiful, if that spirit is not present.

It is not my proper office, as a Pastor of Christ's flock, to point out the faults and the remedy in the organization of the body politic. Perhaps I am not blinder than others to those faults, and, perhaps, many others, no better fitted than myself for

the office, would do well to leave the work to wiser heads and better hands than their own.

I am not at all disposed to undervalue the science of political economy, nor to assert that many of the popular views of political economists are not right views, many of their plans, right plans; but I would have political economy kept to its proper place, and in its proper department; and I must lift up my voice, however feeble it may be, against the cant of a party, that would propose to remedy every evil, by ways which are founded neither on sound philosophy nor common sense.

I would direct the attention of my reader to the remedy provided by God himself, for evils which neither the laws of our country, nor the laws of society can reach; and here I would, therefore, repeat, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its pure and holy simplicity, is the remedy for the thousand evils, which are *effects* to the real *cause* of all misery and suffering,—that *cause* is *sin*.

If we propose to reform society, we begin at the wrong end, if we begin *merely* with the great body. We must begin with the individual; for any body of men is made up of a certain number of individuals. Again, not only is it necessary in order to reform a body of individuals, to begin with the separate individual, but in order to reform the individual, it is absolutely necessary to begin with his heart. This is the peculiar province of the Christian Pastor, as being the commission of Him whose demand of every man is, "My son, give me thy heart," and who has graciously added, "a new heart will I give you."

Hodnet, 1834.

THE

PASTOR OF DRONFELLS.

"Where is the flock that was given thee, that beautiful flock?" — JEREMIAH, xiii. 20.

"The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry, our right arm is withered; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains. For no man ever excelled in a profession to which he did not feel an attachment bordering on enthusiasm; though what in other professions is enthusiasm, is, in ours, the dictate of sobriety and truth."

ROBERT HALL.

THE PASTOR OF DRONFELLS.

CHAPTER I.

" Come as a watchman ; take thy stand
Upon thy tower amidst the sky,
And when the sword comes on the land,
Call us to fight, or warn to fly."

MONTGOMERY.

" I SHALL often look back to the happy hours I have passed in this study. You have taught me to be happy, sir, in what seems to me the right way." The young man who spoke thus, was, perhaps, nineteen, or scarcely so old. There was something strikingly noble in his appearance, and there was a natural grace and sweetness about his manners, which made him a general favourite among those who knew him. His tutor smiled, and, after regarding him in silence for some moments, he said, " As usual, Nigel, you like to find an excuse for closing your book. O yes," he continued, " I be-

lieve you, without any protestations on your part. You look happy, and I trust you are beginning to be happy, as you say, in the right way — but I still maintain my position about closing the book. When will you ever lose that restless desire of turning from one subject to another, and settling to none? When will you learn to give yourself, with a spirit of quiet, manly application, to one pursuit? I could scarcely help smiling when you spoke so earnestly just now of looking back to the days spent in this old study, for I fear that many of them have been weary days to you. I sometimes doubt, Nigel, whether you will have sufficient stedfastness to devote yourself to the sacred profession which at present you seem to prefer." — "Seem to prefer!" repeated Forester reproachfully. "I cannot answer you, sir, with as much indignation as I did Leslie, the other day, when he brought the same accusation against me; but I do hope that a time may come, when you will both know me better than to hold such an unjust opinion." — "My reason," said his tutor, "is, perhaps, the same as Leslie's. I think that at present your imagination is more interested than your heart; in fact, I do not think you know yourself well enough to answer for your state of mind four years hence.

"You have yet the ordeal of a college life to go through, and you have much to learn of your own weakness, and of that strength by which alone a

man is enabled to meet difficulties and to resist and overcome temptation. But, come, you have closed your book — we will open another volume, and we will ask Mr. Leslie to read with us." — "Shall I go for him?" said Forester; but, as he spoke, Felix Leslie entered the room. "We are so soon to part," said Mr. Russell, "that I wish you to read with me a very important part of the Scriptures, and I would make it as my last request to you, my dear young friends, that you keep this portion of the Holy Bible constantly before you, that is, while you continue to make the service of God's sanctuary the object of your choice. If you are to look upon holy orders as your future profession, you are to look upon yourselves as already set apart for the service of God, and the church of God, for which He has paid the costly price of His own blood.

"It is to the thirty-third chapter of the book of Ezekiel that I would call your attention. 'The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of my people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet and warn the people; then, whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound

of the trumpet, and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him; but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.' Who, in reading this address," said Mr. Russell, "can doubt, or question for a moment the duty of the watchman? Suppose at this very time, we, in this quiet valley, dreaded an invasion from some powerful enemy, and suppose that, by general agreement, watchers had been appointed from among us, to take their station on the heights around us. There are but a few sheep quietly feeding on the summit of the mountain just above us; but see, at least imagine that you see, in their place, an armed soldier pacing to and fro, and stopping, from time to time, to send forth his glance over the country beyond him. A trumpet is slung from his shoulder, that he may give the first signal of alarm should the enemy appear. See, he has stopped again," and as he spoke, his eyes all the while fixed upon the mountain, Nigel looked up as if he had expected to behold the watchman there. "He has seen the enemy approaching, for he turns towards this valley; he raises his arm and points in the opposite direction, and now the trumpet is at his lips, and he has sounded the signal of alarm. He is a faithful

watchman. If we in the valley are not roused, if we suffer the enemy to come down upon us, and find us unprepared, surely the blame cannot fall upon the watchman; he has executed his trust. But suppose he sleeps upon station, and we in the valley, whom he has engaged to warn, know nothing of the approach of the enemy till our eyes are dazzled by their naked swords, and the shout of an easy victory mingles with the death-groans of our falling companions. How shall that wretched watchman answer for the lives which have fallen a sacrifice to his guilty negligence?

"Have you ever read this chapter of Ezekiel with attention?"—Felix had read it, "but not," he replied, "with attention." — Nigel did not remember to have read it at all. "I ask you both," said Mr. Russell, "because it is upon the spiritual import and application of the portion I have read to you that I would fix your attention, not for the present hour, but for the whole period of your sojourn on earth. You are training for the ministry of the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His blood; and not only is the crook of the pastoral office to be committed to your hands, but the watchman's trumpet of alarm. It would be better for each of you to be cut off by a sudden death-blow from among your fellow-men, in this your morning of life, than to become an hireling shepherd, or a slothful watchman in the service of Christ. We live in eventful times, and the safety

of our holy Church of England is not so fearfully endangered by her open enemies as by the presence of traitors within the camp; but I would direct your view to subjects of far deeper consideration than the existence of any particular church on earth, however orthodox or evangelical in character. Your commission has to do with the blood of the everlasting covenant, and with the blood of man: you must either preach faithfully the efficacy of the one, or be stained with the other. Listen to the spiritual application of that passage of Ezekiel which we have been reading. 'So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them, from Me, when I say unto the wicked, O, wicked man! thou shalt surely die! If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way, to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.' Not only will your commission be to sound the trumpet of alarm, but to blow the silver trumpet, which, we read, in the days of their gladness, and in the solemn days, the children of the Lord were directed to sound over their burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of their peace offerings; — the silver trumpet which assembled the people, not to meet the armies of the

enemy in battle array, but to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; — the silver trumpet of the Gospel sounded of old on the great day of the atonement. The strong-holds of ungodliness shall fall before the sweet and solemn sound of the Gospel trumpet, even as the walls of Jericho fell down flat before the joyful blast of the trumpet of the jubilee. I would not let you leave my roof without addressing you very solemnly, but with as much affection as seriousness, on this subject; but, indeed, it is not the consideration of your responsibility with regard to others that will move you, nor any teaching of mine. The trumpet of alarm must not only be sounded forth from you to rouse up others; it must sound in your own ear, and search your own heart. The sweet sound of the Gospel, in like manner, must not only be heard by others from your lips — that silver trumpet must be blown for yourself. The message you are to deliver to others must not only be clearly understood and apprehended by your mind — it must be written upon your heart. Who but the Spirit of God can write it there? The word you preach must be an engrafted word, which you yourself have first meekly received in order to the saving of your own souls."

The four years of which Mr. Russell spoke, and nearly two more, had passed away. Nigel had

not changed his mind; he had taken his first degree at Cambridge, and he had resided, during a short time, at several of the foreign courts. We do not say whether this was the best preparation in the world for the Christian ministry; but, soon after his return from the continent, he obtained a title for holy orders in the diocese of the Bishop of ——. After sending in his papers, he had an interview with the bishop by appointment.

CHAPTER II.

> "Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary."
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> *Ezekiel* xliv. 5.

Nigel Forester was ushered into the library of the Bishop of —— by an elderly servant. The quiet and respectful manner of the man bore some testimony to the fact, that he belonged to a family, the master of which knew how "to rule his own house" wisely and piously, as well as "to take care of the Church of God." The countenance of the bishop was grave, but his manner was remarkably kind and encouraging; it was even courteous: its courteousness, however, was evidently acquired during a life spent in the courts of the King of Glory. It did not remind you of the usages of high worldly society, but it told of a character that had desired one thing of the Lord, that had sought one object—

" to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His Temple."

" I always wish," he said to Nigel, " to converse with every young candidate for Holy Orders who may present himself to me for ordination, and I hope you will speak to me as to a friend whom you can trust. The directions which we, the bishops of the church, receive from the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, is to lay hands suddenly on no man. It is not merely from the regard to the character of the church as a body, that I would endeavour to yield an implicit obedience to this sacred command; but I am well convinced that no being is so wretched or so contemptible as the hireling pastor in the Church of God. I would, therefore, counsel the young candidate for ordination to look well into his motives, and into himself, before he undertakes the charge of a flock. I would have you consider deeply and earnestly the questions and answers in the Ordination Service. As Bishop Burnet remarks upon them, 'What greater force or energy could be put in words, than is in them? The dedication of the whole man, of his time and labours, and the separating himself from all other cares, to follow this one thing with all possible application and zeal. Nothing less than this is required of you.' I do not speak particularly of deacons' orders, or priests' orders, when I would remind you that you must

be diligent in prayer, and in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh. The pastoral care must be your entire business, and must possess both your thoughts and your time. I could even beseech you with tears not to take the charge of Christ's sheep, unless you will devote yourself wholly to them, to feed and to guide them. I must be very plain with you, and ask you questions which I should not wish to ask except in private; questions, however, which must be answered to yourself, and to the great Head of the Church. Do you enter into the holy ministry with any by-ends in view? with any anxious thought to advance yourself in the world? In this profession, above all others, the pure in heart, and they alone, shall see God.

"It is my custom, Mr. Forester, not only to desire my chaplain to converse with all who present themselves for Holy Orders, but to have a confidential interview with each of them, myself. But though I ask you now if you have received a call from the Holy Spirit to ordination, and though I should be glad to hear you answer me, I do not require you to do so. I only beseech you not to come before me in that solemn service of our church, unless you can then answer my questions satisfactorily. I do not mean that you are required to hear a voice from heaven, saying 'I call you;'

but, as it has been well said *, ‘ your judgment, enforced by the dictates of your conscience will tell you’ whether the Lord hath called you or no. Ask yourself, as in the presence of God, ‘ Do I feel assured of this call ?’ ”

Nigel seemed deeply impressed; and the voice in which he replied was low and humble. “ I would rather consider some things that you have said to me, my lord, more seriously, than give you an hasty answer; but I may declare most solemnly, that I prefer, and always have preferred the office of a clergyman to any other; why, I can scarcely tell. I may, very probably, come into possession of a valuable living a few years hence; but I trust I can say, that the consideration of that living has never weighed with me. It would be folly for me to say, I will not accept it; but I could give it up at this moment, without a sigh, did I see that my duty required me to do so. I desire nothing in comparison to being a minister in the church of God; and I have been long in this mind; still I can give no proper answer, at present, to your lordship’s question, ‘ Do I consider myself to be called by the Spirit ?’ ”—“ You are aware, Mr. Forester,” said the bishop, “ that this question might be called the one great question of the Ordination Service ? You have, of course, read over that service ?” Nigel blushed, but he did not hesitate;

* Masillon, quoted by Bridges.

he made no equivocation, no excuse; he replied at once "I have not read the ordination service; indeed I have not begun to read for my examination."—"My dear young friend," said the bishop, "I trust you distinguish between what is commonly called reading for orders, (if by the expression is meant being prepared for a critical and historical examination in Greek and Latin,)—I trust you distinguish between such necessary reading, and that in which the heart is instructed, and the Holy Spirit is its teacher; that sort of study by which the immortal creature is made wise unto salvation. I honour your plain-spoken confession. I have been also a young man, Mr. Forester, and perhaps a far more thoughtless man than yourself. I often feel inclined to say of myself, in the words of the admirable Cecil, when recurring to what he had been when a youth, 'Who would have thought it possible to make any impression on that young fellow of eighteen?'

"If there is one part of my sacred calling, as a bishop or overseer, of which I feel the reponsibility more awfully sacred than another, it is that of the ordination of ministers in the church. I will depend on you to consider, with prayer for divine light, the whole Ordination Service; and I will read to you, before we part, as a recommendation of the book, a page of 'Burnet's Pastoral Care.' You will find that valuable little volume on the printed list of books which I recommend to my younger clergy. The first question

that is put in the office of deacon, is, 'Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office; to serve God, for the promoting of His glory, and the edifying of His people? This (he continues) is the first step by which a man dedicates himself to the service of God; and, therefore, it ought not to be made by any that has not this divine vocation. Certainly the answer that is made to this ought to be well considered; for, if any says, 'I trust so,' that yet knows nothing of any such motion, and can give no account of it, he lies to the Holy Ghost; and makes his first approach to the altar with a lie in his mouth, and that not to men, but to God; and how can one expect to be received by God, or be sent and sealed by Him, that dares do a thing of so crying a nature, as to pretend that he trusts he has this motion, who knows that he has it not; who has made no reflections on it; and, when asked what he means by it, can say nothing concerning it, and yet he dares venture to come and say it to God and His Church. If a man pretends a commission from a prince, or indeed from any person, and acts in his name upon it, the law will fall on him and punish him: and shall the great God of heaven and earth be thus vouched, and His mission be pretended to by those whom He has neither called nor sent? and shall not He reckon with those who dare to run without His mission, pretending that they trust they have it,

when perhaps they understood not the importance of it, nay, and perhaps some laugh at it as an enthusiastical question, who yet will go through with the office? They come to Christ for the loaves; they hope to live by the altar and the gospel, how little soever they serve at the one or preach the other. It cannot be denied but that this question carries a sound in it that seems a little too high, and that may rather raise scruples, as importing somewhat that is not ordinary, and that seems to favour of enthusiasm; and therefore it was put here, without doubt, to give great caution to such as come to the service of the church; many may be able to answer it truly according to the sense of the church, who may yet have great doubting in themselves concerning it; but every man that has it not, must needs know that he has it not.

"You will think of these things, Mr. Forester; I am sure, from your ingenuous manner, that you will," said the bishop, in taking leave of Nigel. "I might say much more to you, but I would rather commend you to the word of God and to prayer. Our next meeting will be when my chaplain presents you to me in the holy congregation for ordination. I beseech you to ask for God's teaching and God's guidance on this subject. Do not let me have to grieve, years hence, that I ever ordained you to the charge of a Christian fold.

"Sit down and count the cost, before you make

your final determination. Ask for wisdom of Him who giveth liberally to all who ask Him and upbraideth not, and beware of engaging in his service with a lukewarm spirit. Remember who hath said, ' No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' I have now spoken my mind to you, and you have heard my warning. If you come to be ordained, having passed a good examination before my chaplain, and are recommended by him, I cannot refuse to ordain you; but beware — the risk will remain with you. It would be better for you to give up your Living, nay, the whole world, were it offered you, than to lose your own soul and the souls of a Christian flock."

It so happened, that Felix Leslie was at the same time a candidate for holy orders. In his interview with the bishop, the question which had been put to his friend Forester was addressed to him. He endeavoured to reply to it. "I am asked a plain question," said Felix, "and I must, therefore, endeavour to give a plain answer. As to any sensible influences of the Holy Ghost, I cannot describe them, or give an account of the manner in which, if it has really pleased God to call me, I have been called; but, as it is rather by the effects of the new birth, that the fact of the new birth may be known in one that is born again of the Spirit, for as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot

tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit. In like manner I would say, I cannot describe the manner in which I believe, tremblingly, but heartily believe, I have been called to the ministry of God's Holy Church. I cannot speak of sensible influences, influences on the senses; I would walk by faith and not by sight. I wish to have one single object before me, and to regard it with a single eye. The first grace I look for, and desire to find in myself, a grace which is certainly not the natural produce of the soil, is lowliness of spirit; I cannot, however, dare to say, that I am poor in spirit, alas! I find it is possible to be proud of being humble. You ask me, what can I say of myself. I reply, I can say nothing; promise nothing, but to turn my wishes into prayers, entreating in those prayers that God will keep me instant in prayer. I know that the chief hindrance to our becoming faithful ministers is in the will; and if it were possible for me to have any natural will from myself to make a choice or to give a preference, I would say the ministry of the gospel is my choice, my decided preference; one day in the courts of the Lord is dearer to me than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather bear the reproach of Christ, than possess all the treasures of the universe; but I pretend not to having any natural will or power to please God. I have often felt that I can will and do nothing without the grace of God by Christ preventing

me, that I may have a good will, and working with me when (or if) I have that good will. I remember at the same time," he continued, "the words of our Lord to 'one of the multitude,' 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth,' and as he answered, so would I, at once, without hesitation, 'Lord I believe,' and then I would stop, doubt, distrust myself, and falling low before His cross, cry out, (as feeling, that when I looked to myself, or from myself, I must fail,) 'Help thou mine unbelief!'—If I may speak of myself as called and set apart for the service of the sanctuary, I may say also, that I never had so astounding a sight of my own iniquities as when I believed that God had set His love upon me; and if the gospel of the Blessed God should be committed to my trust, and I should be counted faithful by his putting me into His ministry, I am sure, when in speaking of that faithful saying which is worthy of all acceptation, 'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' I am sure, my confession will be then, as it now is, 'of whom I am chief.'"

CHAPTER III.

——— He "entreats that servants may abound,"
Of those pure altars worthy; ministers
Detached from pleasure, to the love of gain
Superior, insusceptible of pride,
And by ambition's longings undisturbed;
"Men whose delight is where their duty leads."
WORDSWORTH.

THE doors of the cathedral were open, but not a person was to be seen, not a footstep sounded. The ordination was to be held that morning by the Bishop of ——, and Leslie and Forester were to be admitted to holy orders. Nigel rose at an early hour and sought the apartment of his friend. Leslie had already left it. Nigel passed at once to the cathedral, and was not sorry to find himself alone, to compose and prepare his mind for the solemn ordinance. In silent thoughtfulness he paced the quiet aisles, till, seeing several persons enter the cathedral, he turned away into a little

side chapel in the darkest part of the vast edifice. The appointed hour at which the sacred service was to begin, had not yet struck. Another person had chosen that still retreat, and he was sitting on the steps of an old monument in the middle of the chapel, and leaning his head upon his hand.

He saw that it was Felix, and was turning away, but Felix did not turn from him. His voice, always gentle, was even more gentle than usual in its deep low tones. "I'm afraid you are not well," said Nigel, "there is such an unnatural paleness about your face."—"I believe I am very well," replied Felix, "but I never felt so agitated as I feel this morning." Nigel thought that he perfectly understood the feelings of his friend, till Felix added, "I have been endeavouring to get over being so deeply affected with the outward circumstances and accompaniments of this Divine ordinance. I do not under-rate them, but I cannot under-rate myself sufficiently; and I fear, that when the impression of the outward ceremonies passes away from my senses, I may find that no spiritual improvement has been working within me. Our prayer should be, that we may receive the spiritual grace of ordination from the Great Head of the church in the hidden man of the heart." Nigel said nothing; he was not a deep thinker, nor did he feel deeply where the things of God were concerned. He could sympathize passionately in the high imaginations, or the wild raptures of some of his favourite

poets; but he had no deep fellow-feeling with those who are ever ready to cast down high imaginations, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, preferring the simplicity which is in Christ, and the truth as it is in Jesus; nay, the very foolishness of the gospel above the wisdom of this world, and esteeming all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ crucified, by whom the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world. Alas! how mistaken are some vainglorious spirits, who imagine that they who meekly take the lowest seat at the foot of the cross of Christ, are men of fettered and grovelling intellect; not only may it be said with a first-rate philosopher of the present day,* that among the various undertakings of men, there cannot be mentioned one more important, nor can there be mentioned one more sublime, than an intention to form the human mind anew after the Divine Image; but, as he elsewhere insists, "the powers of the understanding, and the intellectual graces, are precious gifts, and every Christian, according to the opportunities vouchsafed to him, is bound to cultivate the one and acquire the other." The disciple of Christ, therefore, turns the powers of his intellect away from the poor and beggarly elements of this world, to the high and holy contemplation of those things which God hath prepared

* Coleridge.

for them that love Him, things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive. And the language of his adoring soul is that of the apostle: "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

"Is it possible," said an elderly man, who was present at that ordination, "for any one to enter thus solemnly upon such sacred engagements, and to go away and become a drone, or a mere trifler in so high a calling?"

This gentleman was the uncle of Felix Leslie; he was, however, a Dissenter, and sincerely attached to his own party, but liberal and unblinded by prejudice. His nephew, who had been left for some years under his guardianship, was that day ordained as a member of the Church of England, without any opposition from his dissenting uncle. It might appear, even to a dissenter, impossible for any one to take upon himself the solemn engagements entered into by a clergyman of the Church of England, and to disregard his high calling; but a celebrated Christian minister* has left it on record, that he did, in the presence of God and of the congregation, declare, that he judged himself to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take the office of a minister of

* Scott, of Aston Sanford,

Christ upon himself, not knowing or believing that there was an Holy Ghost.

This, however, was not the case with Nigel. He was not without thought; he was not irreverent; his imagination was interested and affected; but in his heart and soul he was neither cold nor hot!

His replies to the solemn questions of the bishop were, as to voice and manner, as solemn and reverent as those of any one present; and when the ordination of the priests followed, and that space of holy silence was observed, in which the congregation are desired secretly in their prayers to make their humble supplications to God, the head of Nigel was bowed in lowly reverence, and his voice was joined with that of the bishop and the congregation in the beautiful prayer for the Holy Spirit.

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire!
Thou, the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy seven-fold gifts impart;
Thy blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love;
Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight.
Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of Thy grace;
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;
Where Thou art guide, no ill can come:

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee, of both, to be but one;
That through the ages all along,
This may be our endless song,
Praise to Thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

On the day of the ordination, and on the day following, the young ministers were the guests of the bishop; for he was truly one of those who are given to hospitality. Upon such occasions it was his custom to invite some of the most pious clergy in his diocese, who were truly wise in the wisdom of godliness, to visit him, and to keep up a sort of open house to the young men who came to be ordained ministers. The conversation at the bishop's table was of the noblest description; it was manly conversation in the highest sense of that perverted word. It was such as became the first of God's creatures, man; not in his fallen, but in his redeemed and renewed state. The subject, which was the chief concern with every one present, is of itself enlarging to the intellect, and ennobling to the heart. It is the perversion of man's intellectual powers from their right uses, when they are brought to minister to sin and ungodliness.

The excellent men who met together, were

One in heart, in interest and design,
Girding each other to the race divine.

And in their conversation they seemed unconsciously to follow the rule of the same poet,

"That conversation, choose what theme we may,
But chiefly when religion leads the way,
Should flow, like waters after summer showers,
Not as if raised by mere mechanic powers."

There were present, men whom the newly ordained ministers had long desired to meet, and others, whom having once met, they truly desired to meet again. When the bishop parted with his youthful guests, dismissing them to their several cures, his parting words were in the language of his favourite, Hooker. "He should pray," he said, "that the very ordination of his young ministers might be a seal, as it were, to them, that the self-same divine love which has chosen the instrument to work with, would, by that instrument, effect the thing whereunto He ordained it."

"It is possible, I find," said Felix to his friend Nigel, as they sat together at breakfast the next morning, "to be highly intellectual, and at the same time heartily devoted to God. —— What did you think of the bishop's quotation from Pascal? he brought it forward to prove that a Christian author can match certain writers, who used to be high in your favour, in grandeur of thought.— 'L'homme est si grand, que la grandeur paroit même en ce qu'il se connoit misérable. Un arbre ne se connoit pas misérable. Il est vrai que c'est être misérable que de se connoître misérable; mais c'est aussi être grand que de connoître qu'on est misérable. Ainsi toutes ses misères prouvent sa

grandeur. Ce sont misères de grand Seigneur, misères d'un roi dépossédé.'" — "I was more pleased with that passage from Barrow," said Nigel, "that if we will be truly and thoroughly virtuous, we must be like our Lord, exposed to envy and hatred, to censure and obloquy, to contempt and scorn, to affliction and hardship; every good man must hang on some cross; *εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα.*"

Nigel was, indeed, at least he thought so then, ready to be thought a fool, and to suffer shame and ridicule for Christ's sake. He did not know himself, *his heart was yet but as the stony ground.*

"When shall we meet again?" said the two friends, as they parted.—"Perhaps not for many years," said Nigel, "perhaps never on this side the grave."—"Only let us endeavour to have one grand object before us, Nigel," was the reply of his friend, "to to do our duty, 'the love of Christ constraining us,' and whenever we meet, we shall at last meet for ever in the same glorious abode."

Felix set off at once in the mail, for a sphere of hard labour in a large manufacturing town in the North. Nigel went also to his curacy in a pleasant village in Hertfordshire. The incumbent of the living had been obliged to leave England for the recovery of his health, and Nigel took possession of his elegantly furnished parsonage. In the course of a short time after he arrived at his curacy. Nigel had no very distinct idea of the nature of

those engagements which to all appearance he had so solemnly taken upon himself.

There is nothing extraordinary in this. Admirable and deeply spiritual as our Ordination Services are, there is no inherent power in them to convince or to convert the heart, more especially if their influence enters not the heart, but rests upon the imagination only. Nigel was also one of those characters who are easily influenced by the opinions of their last associates. He wished to please, and to appear to advantage wherever he was. He had persuaded himself when he went up to his ordination, that his first object was to live a godly, righteous, and sober life; but he had not yet sought the only power that could enable him to do so. The exhortation of the bishop, and the conversation of Felix, had their effect, but that effect wore off.

The aspirant for eternity cannot learn too early, that no power short of the Spirit of God can change the heart of man. As it is written of one most important doctrine of our Holy Faith,—"No man may redeem his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him, for it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever." So may it be said of another chief doctrine. No man can change or convert his brother. He must let that alone for ever. The most persuasive entreaties, the most incontrovertible arguments,—warnings the most awful—we shall often see all such

means spending their force upon the hard unbroken rock of man's natural heart, and leaving it as unaffected as they found it.

Nigel was an orphan, and his guardians were kind, but not religious men. His father had been killed in the disastrous battle of Corunna, and when the news reached his mother, who was then in delicate health, it proved almost overwhelming to her; for although it pleased her Heavenly Father to restore her to calmness, and even cheerfulness, he did not restore her to health. She died within the year of her widowhood, commending her little Nigel in humble confidence to God. She could do no more, and she was so highly favoured as to be taught that she could not have done better. She called her little boy to her only a few hours before she died, and she bade him read aloud to her a few verses of the Bible, which she had taught him to read very often to her; and when he had read them, she told him with a faint smile, that God had spoken to her in those passages of His holy word. Nigel had retained a perfect recollection of them. They were these—

"Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me." Jerem. xlix. 11.—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee." Isaiah xlix. 15.—"As one whom

his mother *comforteth*, so will I comfort you." Isaiah lxvi. 13.

"And now, Nigel," she said, "kiss me once more, and then take the Bible (I give it you to keep for my sake) and sit down near me so that I can see you." It was a great treat to Nigel to be allowed to read his mother's Bible, and he sat down on the ground with the sacred volume open on his lap. While his mother's eyes were fixed upon him, and he sat bending over the Bible, and reading, every now and then he looked up, and the eyes of the mother and the child met. At last her eyes closed in sleep. Nigel thought at the time, that she would wake again, and smile upon him again. When they led him away from the room, he trod on tip-toe, fearing to disturb her: but she never woke to smile upon her little son again.

About two years after their ordination, it happened that the two friends met again. Felix was called to London on business of some importance, and on his return to the North, he agreed to pass a few days with his friend Forester. He was welcomed with great kindness; and for the first few hours, while they conversed together upon old times, there seemed no change in Nigel, but the conversation on each side soon began to flag, and Felix perceived, with a heavy heart, that his friend had

begun to lose all taste for high and spiritual subjects. He was living in the midst of a society at once intellectual and elegant, but its influence was obviously enervating to Christian manliness of character. The morning he left Nigel, he put a letter into his hand; its contents were as follows.

"*Midnight.*

"You asked me to day what made my brow so thoughtful, and my manner so cold. I sit down to answer your question, dear Nigel, for you gave me leave to do so, when you added,—'If there is anything you disapprove about me, deal faithfully with me.' I was about to take you at your word, and speak to you plainly, when we were interrupted by the entrance of your guests. I have now a little quiet time for writing, and I will not leave your house without using the privilege which our friendship gives me.

"Did I really seem cold in my manner? I never felt so. I might certainly look grave and thoughtful. Nigel, there was a cause. You are living in a kind of soft and silken ease, forgetting that you are solemnly pledged in the sight of God, to do the work of His ministry. You are fast losing that spiritual manliness of character which is peculiarly needed by one who is called to endure hardness, as a good soldier of our Lord Jesus Christ. If '*it is hard rough work to bring God into His own world,*' and we know it is so; are

you (I put it to your own conscience,) endeavouring to do this hard rough work? Your time seems to be passed among the higher classes of society in your neighbourhood; I know you are related to some of your neighbours; and I believe that all your neighbours are, as you tell me, unexceptionable as to moral character; besides, you belong to their station as a gentleman, but you have a still higher character than that of a gentleman, or a mere moralist, to sustain. You are to move in a higher parallel, to 'take a higher walk,' and whenever you enter society, it should be tacitly understood that you are to keep your place as a Christian pastor. The clergyman is not to be sunk, I say *sunk* in the gentleman; I am sure I do not mean that a clergyman is to put in any claim to importance, as if he would fain send a herald before him into society, saying, Behold a personage of vast consequence! On the contrary, he, of all other men, should be the readiest to show a manly humility in every company, and a manly meekness under impertinent affronts, if such should be put upon him. Forgive me for saying so, but when I dined with you at Mr. Maitland's, I saw that you are accustomed to sink the clergyman in the gentleman.

"Do you remember what George Herbert says on this point? — 'After a man is once a minister, he cannot agree to come into any house, where he shall not exercise what he is, unless he forsake his

plough, and look back.' Or again, that wise remark of Cecil's, 'Lord Chesterfield says a man's character is degraded when *he is to be had.* A minister ought never *to be had.*' There never was a time in which it was so absolutely necessary for a clergyman of our holy church to stand forth in his decided calling and character, as the present. Thousands are on the watch for our halting. But should this discourage us? Should we not rather rejoice in having a fresh inducement, an additional stimulus, to make us go on straight forward in our Christian course. We are always too fearfully inclined to loiter idly on the way. You told me, in answer to a question I put to you the first evening I came, that your parish was so small, it could not occupy much of your time. Have you not discovered that a faithful minister of Christ may make what work he pleases for himself, even among a few hundred parishioners. There is great need, and great capability, wherever there is but one human being. You must hear Cecil again, on this point. I had indeed bought the book for myself, but I leave it with you. You will see that I had cut only a few pages, but I am much pleased with all that I have read. 'What man on earth is so pernicious a drone as an idle clergyman? — a man engaged in the most serious profession in the world, who rises to eat, and drink, and lounge, and trifle; and goes to bed, and then rises again to do the same! Our office is the most laborious in the

world.' Observe, too, how he continues: 'I received a most useful hint from Dr. Bacon, then father of the University, when I was at college. I used frequently to visit him at his living, near Oxford; he would say to me, 'What are you doing? What are your studies?'—'I am reading so and so.'—'You are quite wrong. When I was young I could turn any piece of Hebrew into Greek verse with ease. But when I came into this parish, and had to teach ignorant people, I was wholly at a loss; I had no furniture. They thought me a great man, but that was their ignorance; for I knew as little as they did of what was most important to them to know.'

"Think on these stirring words, my own friend. Indeed, indeed, ours is no idle calling. The watchman on his tower has no idle post; the shepherd no idle charge; and if we are to warn every one in our parish 'publicly, and from house to house, night and day, even with tears,' have we any time to waste, not merely upon high questions of worldly wisdom, but upon horses or music, or any of the mere elegant amusements of this poor, passing, unsatisfying world. I am sure I should not cry out if I were to see you take up a tragedy of Sophocles, or a volume of Shakespeare or Wordsworth. We all know that the bow cannot be always bent. I hardly know why I mention Sophocles or Wordsworth, except that, if I remember rightly, your relaxations in former times were usually of a charac-

ter at once intellectual and imaginative. I am, however, the more astonished to see you engrossed with mere common-place and frivolous amusements, and to find that amusement is not your relaxation, but your occupation. I am half inclined to say no more, nay not even to send you what I have written, for I dread lest I should lose your friendship by my plain and somewhat rough counsels. Understand me, I have not watched you with the cold and calculating observance of a spy, but with the deep and affectionate anxiety of a faithful friend. Perhaps there is scarcely any one living so skilled in the knowledge of your character as I am, owing to the unreserved confidence you were once accustomed to place in me. I have been heartily disappointed — why should I not confess it? I expected to find you given up wholly to your glorious work. I find you trifling with the life, the eternal life of your flock. You have the life of souls in your hands. How will you be able to answer, when you are called to render up your account at the great day of account, 'I am pure from the blood of all men.' You cannot forget how this our deepest responsibility was once urged upon us by our kind, good tutor. My dear familiar friend, with whom I have lived in such true and happy fellowship, you will surely bear more from me than from most other persons. I am sure I would bear with any advice — nay receive it with hearty gratitude from you. If you and I fear to speak faithfully, and so

fail to do so, one to another, who shall fulfil the sacred duty of friendship to either of us. Bear with me patiently, indulgently, for I have still something more to say. I bring this charge against you, that, not merely as a pastor, but as a gentleman, you are trifling. I well remember a remark of the celebrated Doctor Barrow's, in a sermon of his on 'Industry in our particular calling as gentlemen.' 'He says, that a true gentleman is constantly asking himself, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? what shall I render to Him, not only as a man, for all the gifts of nature; as a Christian, for all the blessings of grace; but as a gentleman, also, for the many advantages of this my condition? A gentleman hath more talents committed to him, and consequently more employment required of him: if a rustic labourer, or a mechanic artizan, hath one talent, a gentleman hath ten. The truest pattern of gentility,' he beautifully observes, 'was even our Lord himself; and gentlemen would do well to make Him the pattern of their life.'

"However, as I said before, my dear Nigel, you are not only a gentleman, but a pastor of Christ's flock, of God's church, which He, Jehovah himself, hath purchased with *his own blood*, the blood of the second person in the Eternal Godhead. This consideration is indeed awful; it is no less awful than real; but its awfulness must stand side by side with its reality.

"Once more, my own friend, let me press upon you the delightful privilege of our calling, not in my own, but in far wiser, better words:* 'Others are glad of the leisure of the Lord's day, and now and then of an hour besides, when they can lay hold upon it. But we may keep a continual Sabbath. We may do almost nothing else but study and talk of God and glory, and engage in acts of prayer and praise; and drink in his sacred saving truths. Our employment is all high and spiritual. Whether we be alone, or in company, our business is for another world. Oh! that our hearts were but more tuned to this work! What a blessed joyful life should we thus live!'"

Nigel did not reply immediately to this letter. It displeased him, and he would not confess to himself that it did so; he delayed writing, and before he wrote, he received the news that the living of Dronfells, the reversion of which fell to him, had become vacant.—For a while he forgot Felix and his letter.

* Baxter's Reformed Pastor.

CHAPTER IV.

"All that a minister doth is a kind of preaching, and if you live a careless life, you preach that sin to your people by your practice. If you trifle away your time, they take it as if you said to them, 'Neighbours, this is the life you should all live; on this course you may venture without any danger."

BAXTER'S REFORMED PASTOR.

NIGEL arrived at Dronfells. The night had closed in before he had passed through the mountain defile leading to the village.

As he entered his new parish, he leaned forward, and strained his eyes to catch some notion of the place of his future abode; and then threw himself back, as wondering at the interest he had unconsciously taken in a dull, distant village in the north of England.

He was a little curious, and a little careless about the place. The carriage stopped, and a deep-toned bell was rung violently. Nigel started up, and looked somewhat eagerly through the win-

dows as the gates were thrown open, and the carriage passed under an archway into the little garden-court in front of the rectory. He had been expected, and in the porch of the venerable mansion his servant stood waiting for him, with a light in his hand, and led him through a comfortable-looking hall into a pleasant oak parlour, where a large wood fire was blazing brightly. Nigel had sent his servant to Dronfells some weeks before him, and given him orders to attend the sale of the last incumbent, and purchase all the best of the furniture, (for the greater part of it was sold) and when he came to his new abode, he was astonished at the air of comfort which he found in several of the apartments. The servant knew his master's ways, and he had unpacked his master's books, and filled the empty shelves of the bookcases; he had arranged his master's writing table, and he had even taken upon himself to hang a very favourite picture in this oak parlour. Nigel thought it had never looked better than by the light of the large lamp which stood already lighted on the table. "You will be wanting tea, sir," said the kind-hearted attendant (lifting the hissing and bubbling kettle from the hob, and beginning to prepare the tea for his master) "and do take a seat on the sofa; for I have drawn it round to the fire. I dare say you are chilly and tired, sir, after your long journey, and with first coming into this mountain air. It is a fine pleasant spot this, sir, when you come

to see it by daylight; and the people are most obliging, though quite rustic. They are pleased enough at the thought of your coming, good honest souls! but, as I tell them, they will like you a deal better when they know you. Ah! they have begun to ring; I knew they would. Do you hear the church-bells ringing to welcome you? may you live long to hear them, is what I say — as long as the good old rector before you." — "Thank you, thank you, for your kind wishes, Gilbert; but now tell me, are there any letters for me? and has any one called here?" — "There is one letter, sir," said Gilbert, "and I put it on the chimney-piece. Yes, sir, that is it; I sent you all that came before, under cover to Mr. Maitland, as you directed me, and you must have got them before you left his house. Well, sir, there have been two calls, if I may call them so; one from a lady who knew you were not arrived. She is one of the sweetest and kindest ladies I ever saw, and I have seen many: she is not over young, I should suppose at this time, and nearer fifty than forty." — "And who may she be, Gilbert?" — "Miss Evelyn, sir, the daughter, the only child of the late rector; and she lives just on the other side of the lake, in that long, low cottage; but, of course, you can't see the spot at night. She called, not at the house, for she never set her foot within the porch; but rang the great bell very gently, and then asked permission to take a few cuttings from a rose tree that

grows up the garden wall; for she said it was a great favourite of her father's." — "And the other visitor?" inquired Nigel. — "The other visitor was Sir Claude Vernon, that you used to see so much of when we were at Florence. Why, sir, he has a grand castle on the rocks, hanging over the upper end of the lake. He called, and Master John, his son, who is grown a fine tall young man; and one of the young ladies was with them on horseback; and they all left their cards. Sir Claude, and Mr. Vernon, and Miss Helen." — "Not Miss Vernon, Gilbert, but Miss Helen. Are you sure it was not Miss Dora Vernon? No, I see you're right," he added, taking up the cards, and seeming to study them: "this is Miss Helen Vernon's card." Nigel looked a little disappointed. "The country seems very wild and grand, Gilbert, and I suppose the lake is beautiful. How near are we to the lake?" "So near, sir, that if we had not been talking, you would have heard the dash of the waters against the terrace wall. Why, sir, the terrace under the window is on the very edge of the lake." Nigel did not stop to answer him, but with the eager delight of a child, he threw open the middle window of the room, which was rather a glass door than a window. In a few moments he was standing on the broad terrace-walk, listening to the gentle dashing of the water, and looking out over the broad expanse of the beautiful but now darkened lake, where the burning stars were shining almost as brightly as in the

clear dark heavens above. "This is really very fine," he said to himself: "how freshly the mountain air blows over one's face! What a magnificent range of mountains! I am sure I can see their outline, for the moon is rising behind them, and that one intense star adds to the soft light. That heavy mass of shade near the margin of the lake must be a mass of rich foliage. There are lights twinkling out high above the dark trees, and close to the edge of the lake, and streaming down into the water in lines of light. Perhaps that modest, sweet-looking Dora Vernon is at this moment looking out from the stately castle where she lies,

'The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.'

Hark! the bells are beginning to ring again: that, then, must be the church tower! And now," he added, "I think I feel a little chilly; and the fresh air from the mountains is not quite so endurable as it was; I think I have had enough of romance to-night. This is a pleasanter sight to me than dark waters, and moonshine, and dim outlines, this peep into a warm and well-lighted room; and I think the singing sound of the tea-kettle is just now quite as agreeable a murmur as that of the lake!"

Nigel was soon half lying and half lounging upon the comfortable sofa of the oak parlour, the window shut, the curtains drawn, the fire blazing, newspapers and magazines scattered in careless

profusion around him. "Yes, you may pour me out another cup of tea," he said to Gilbert, when his servant entered, "and then come again in an hour, to take the things away; and just find me a paper-knife, for I have torn this magazine very clumsily in cutting it with my finger."

"A candle, Gilbert," he said, when Gilbert entered again; "and pray shew me where I am to sleep."

"Shall I tell the other servants to come to prayers, sir?" said Gilbert.—"To prayers?" he replied thoughtfully. "Yes, sir; we have had prayers every night since I came. Mrs. Anderson, your new housekeeper, is a very pious respectable woman, and she knows the habits of this house, as it was in poor Mr. Evelyn's time."—"Come in to prayers?" repeated Nigel.—"Why yes, or rather no;" and he took up the candle which Gilbert had lighted, "not to-night, Gilbert. I am very sleepy; but to-morrow night."—"And to-morrow morning?" said Gilbert."—"Of course," replied Nigel.—"Family prayers? of course!—we have been very careless in Hertfordshire lately. I forget what led us to get out of the habit there. I am glad to hear you give so good an account of Mrs. Anderson."

The sermons of the new rector of Dronfells were thought very good and very eloquent, but rather

too flowery. Their goodness came from a printed volume, their flowers from Nigel's own pen; for he fell into the common mistake of attempting

"To dress up Truth in artificial flowers."

Mr. Forester was popular with many of his parishioners. He did not neglect them. His nods of recognition were frequent, and he often stopped to talk kindly and familiarly with one or another at their cottage doors. Sometimes he entered a little lowly dwelling, where the inmate was peculiarly pleasing, or the room peculiarly clean. He was not proud — he was very good-tempered, and very charitable, in the modern sense of that once comprehensive word: the word is now, from its long use among unloving and unholy spirits, like a rich garment, worn threadbare. It once expressed the overflowing love of a heart renewed in all its powers; it now means little more than almsgiving. Nigel was li kedto a certain extent; but it might be said of his kindness and his almsgiving, "These things oughtest thou to have done, and not to have left the others undone.' These were indeed duties of tremendous importance, which he ought not to have left undone.

It was observed by some of his flock, that he never spoke to them as one to whom the glad tidings of the Gospel were entrusted by the King of Glory. Life and immortality were in his com-

mission, but he was as one who knew not his commission.

Nigel was sometimes seen to join Miss Evelyn in his walks through the village, where she was as constantly employed among the poor and the sick as she had been in her father's lifetime. The chief part of his time was passed with the family at Castle Vernon, and in more than a year after his first arrival at Dronfells, it was reported, and with truth, that Miss Vernon was about to become the wife of the new rector.

CHAPTER V.

"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O my God!"
PSALM li. 19.

THE sides of the room were covered with pictures of rare excellence and beauty, except where low bookcases filled up the recesses; the windows were thrown open, and the fresh but gentle air was felt to enter rather by the fragrance it brought with it — the fragrance of jasmines and honeysuckles, than by any motion to the eye, or any sound to the ear. At the farther end of this pleasant saloon, two sisters were sitting on the same sofa. One of them was bending down her sweet face, and her small and graceful throat over her embroidery; the other had been turning over the leaves of Flaxman's Outlines from Æschylus.

"How very beautiful this is," said Dora Vernon, and she continued to speak eloquently on the

subject. Her sister, Helen, raised her head and looked smilingly on the open book. "You have waited very patiently, Dora, till John had read those sonnets, those exquisite translations. I think no one ever translated better than Lady Dacre has done. Was it not Ugo Foscolo who said, that the very spirit of the original sonnets breathes in her translations from Petrarch?" — "We may hear one more, Dora — the description of Petrarch's first interview with Laura. You'll like it best of all."

"A tender paleness stealing o'er her cheek,
Veil'd her sweet smile as 'twere a passing cloud,
And such pure dignity of love avow'd,
That in my eyes my full soul strove to speak:
Then knew I how the spirits of the blest
Communion hold in Heaven; so beam'd serene
That pitying thought, *by every eye unseen*
Save mine: wont ever on her charms to rest,
Each grace angelic, each meek glance humane,
That Love e'er to his fairest votaries lent,
By this were deem'd ungentle, cold disdain!
Her lovely looks with sadness downward bent,
In silence to my fancy seem'd to say,
Who calls my faithful friend so far away?"

John Vernon had scarcely finished reading this beautiful sonnet, when Mr. Forester entered the room. His appearance and manners were, as usual, strikingly elegant; his countenance full of noble expression; but Dora thought, (and she was well read in his looks) that there was a shade of sad-

ness on his face. He sat down on a low ottoman, and smiled as his eye fell upon a rare copy of Petrarch, old, but in fine preservation, which he had given to Dora, and which she had, perhaps, been reading. Its silver clasps were undone, and it lay open upon the little table that stood near her. A bracelet of large cameos lay beside it. "I have been waiting to thank you, dear Nigel," said Dora, as her smiling glance met his, "for this beautiful bracelet; it was brought me only a few hours ago. I do admire its costly plainness. I never saw such cameos. Those that Lady Bertha gave to Helen are not to be named with them. I would not put on my bracelet till you came to clasp it. I expected you, sir," she added, softly, but with a smile of arch sweetness, holding out her arm to him as she spoke, at least three hours ago. We were to have walked this evening, were we not? — Do you remember by whose appointment, and who fixed the hour?" — "I have been detained," he replied, in a deeper voice than usual, "by" — before he could say by what he had been detained, Dora uttered a faint cry. There was a stain of dark blood on her white sleeve, over which Nigel was still bending. "Nigel, dear Nigel," she said, as her eye glanced from her wrist to his grave countenance, her voice trembling with emotion as she spoke — "Are you ill? are you wounded? what has happened? what has detained you? Oh, never mind the bracelet, speak

to me; how grave you look! It is your manner, and your look, which alarm me, more than this stain of dark blood?" Nigel did look unusually grave; he did not reply for many minutes; at length he replied, in the same subdued voice, — "I was passing by the side of that steep mountain, where the path winds along by the side of a hollow water-course, now almost dry. You remember the grove of old birch-trees, and the little cottage just above the path. We have often stood there, to look down over the beautiful valley beneath. I pass it every day in coming hither. You remember, Dora, once stopping with me to speak to the old man who was the master of that cottage, and the few fields won from the waste around it. He would often converse with me as I passed his door, for I knew him well. This evening he stood, leaning over the gate of his little garden, and had, as usual, a kind word of greeting for me. A murderer, nay do not start at the word, for I repeat it, a murderer stood behind him. I suppose the old man felt no suspicion, and knew him not as an enemy. The instrument of death was in the murderer's hand. He watched his opportunity; and as the old man turned from me, the instrument of death struck him down." Dora grew very pale, and shuddered. "How very dreadful!" she exclaimed, "and you were not quick enough, Nigel, to dash the weapon from the murderer's hand; you could not save the poor old man. I well remember him, and his grave but

pleasant countenance. Did you not master that inhuman wretch?"—"I did not," replied Nigel: "the blood of the old man, as you perceive, has left its stain upon me; but I did not murder him. I certainly stood by and saw him fall. The murderer is at large, and at this moment, if I mistake not, at the same deadly work — but what is that to me?"

Here John Vernon came forward. "What is that to you?" he repeated indignantly; "Nigel, you are no coward; I am certain you are no coward; but if you stood the unmoved witness of that savage murder; if you could have saved that old man's life, even at the price of your own, and did not, were you not as one consenting to the murder? And now, how calm you look! how coolly you speak! you seem wholly unconcerned! while those who listen to your words, your mere words, feel more grief and indignation than yourself." Nigel, at these words, raised his eyes. He was sitting, as John Vernon had described, with an expression of quiet unconcern, upon his usually animated features. He raised his eyes, and fixed them calmly upon the faces of those with whom he had been conversing. He saw Dora's look of sorrowful reproach; he saw her sister's grave displeasure; and the blue eyes of the brother still flashing, while an unnatural sternness sat upon his mild but noble countenance. Nigel spoke again; his voice (perhaps the effort was made with difficulty) was even

more coldly calm than it had been before. "There is blood upon me," he said; "but hear me; bear with me for a short time. I may almost promise you, that this unconcern of mine will pass over to yourselves, before I have done speaking. I shall satisfy you, I fear too easily; and the nature of the horror that you feel towards me shall change its character. Alas! it will be felt no longer, I am very fearful, before I have finished speaking. Only promise me, before I begin, to hear me with patience, and to repress your indignation. I do not speak without a motive, Dora! and, when I have done speaking, I will meekly submit to your severest condemnation. Dora, sweet Dora! do you promise? I would take your hand; but I fear lest you should now withdraw it, shuddering from mine."—"I do promise to hear you, Nigel," replied Dora, in a low and melancholy voice; "God forbid that I, of all persons, should condemn you; but you are so strange, so very strange, Nigel! I never knew you thus till now. Helen will promise you, and John, I'm sure they will."—"We do promise," said the brother and sister. "We will listen to Nigel," continued Helen, addressing her sister; "I am sure I can answer for John as well as for myself, without making one remark upon anything he may say to us, till we have his permission."—"The murder committed this evening," said Nigel, "is not the first that I have witnessed. A deeper stain of blood than any you have seen, far

deeper than the dark blood of that venerable man, has been already upon me. And I have never yet been cleared from its defilement and its guilt. Nay, inhuman as I may seem to you, there is another, and yet another murder to which I have been witness. There was a child, the only child of a poor and very ignorant man in the village below. Little had been done for her in any way, or by any human creature; but that little had produced a rich return, and doubtless, the blessing of Him who alone giveth the increase, and without whom we may plant and we may water in vain was upon her. I have often beheld, with as much delight as astonishment, the untaught grace of her movement, and the beautiful intelligence of her sweet and modest countenance.

"I saw her murdered. I need not dwell upon the horrible details: I did nothing to save her, although I was so near; her blood is upon me — nay, John! not a word, not one word to interrupt me; your promise has been given, you must hear me to the end. There was another murder committed lately. A young mother, and I stood by, a calm spectator of the dreadful deed. The murderer approached her stealthily, and in my presence his hand was uplifted to strike the fatal blow. You will ask me, if the common feelings of a man did not plead for that young fair mother? You will tell me, John, that to save her life, I might have met the death-

strife with that murderer; that I might have wrenched the weapon from his hand. I suppose I am guilty concerning her death, for her blood is upon me also — but I passed by." Here Dora cried out, "Nigel, I must speak, I care not for promises. You shall not go on thus; stop, stop, I beseech you, you must be mad to trifle with my feelings thus: there in no jest is such strange tales as these. These are all foolish fancies of your own creation, and you wish to frighten Helen and myself, and my brother John. Dear Nigel! we have heard enough of these horrid tales. Let us speak on other subjects. I do not love to jest on cruelty and horror; indeed, I can see no jest in such accounts." — "Dora," said Nigel, mildly, "You shall be obeyed; I will dwell no longer on these dark murders, but believe me, whatever I am doing, I am not jesting. Answer me the few short questions I would ask. What is he who stands the unmoved witness of such murders? Who, if he does not aid the murderer in his deeds of blood, does not move his finger, does not raise his voice to stop the death-blow; is not his guilt next in place and in degree to that of the actual murderer? Say that it is; I am sure you think it is."

Dora did not reply; she covered her face with her hands and wept.

"Supposing," continued Nigel — he did not speak quite so calmly as before, "supposing he is even sent to stop the murder, and to warn the

victim?"—"The guilt," said John, "comes little short of the murderer's; the blood of the murder to which he has consented, must weigh like an overwhelming load upon him." "And such would be your judgment, Dora; and yours, Helen?"—"It would, indeed," replied Helen.—"And the judgment is just and true," said Nigel; "I submit to it, you have passed a just judgment upon me." "Indeed, Nigel," said Dora, lifting up her head, "I cannot comprehend you."—"Sweet Dora," he replied, "if you remember, I did not say that I wished you at present to comprehend me, but to listen to me. Yet I did ask for your judgment on my conduct, upon the supposition that I had been present at those murders. I will now explain myself. The aged man of whom I spoke, died this evening; I was present at the time; the murderer of his mortal life was death, the common viewless murderer of all our race, I mean of our bodies. The shock affected me greatly, for he was in cheerful conversation with me at the time. No one was at hand but his little grandson; and, hoping that the old man had fallen in a fit, I sent off the child for our village doctor. Before he came, I used whatever means I could devise to restore life. Nay, had his coming been longer delayed than it was, I should have tried to bleed the insensible man. He came, however, immediately, and he opened a vein at once. The blood flowed freely, which is not usually the case; so freely indeed

that it spurted over me. In our haste I did not think of avoiding it. However, the poor old man did not revive, and after the doctor was gone, and I had sent the little boy up into the fields to find his mother, and to bring her back to her father's cottage, I sat down to wait beside the corpse till they should come to the solitary house. The old man's Bible lay upon his little table; and, for some minutes I sat silent and awe-struck by the deep silence of that chamber of death, turning my gaze upon the calm face of the dead, and then upon the book of life which lay before me, as silent as the breathless lips of the inanimate corpse. Suddenly a thought of agony pierced like a sword through my very soul; my conscience rose before me with terrors far more frightful than those fabled furies; (and he pointed as he spoke to the outlines from Æschylus which lay open before Dora.) The accusations of the still small voice I heard, were far more agonizing than those words of Æschylus, with which the furies pursued and confronted the wretched Orestes,

> 'Thine hour
> Of agony is come, the hour that gives
> The blood that warms thy heart, to quench my thirst.'

The lifeless body of the kind old man appeared before me with the accompaniments of a very different scene from that quiet lowly cottage. It had been quickened into life again, and stood be-

side me; nay, before me, full in the front of the throne of judgment. Anger flashed in his mild eyes, and reproaches and accusations poured from his lips. The words of that Bible which lay neglected and silent before me, blazed out in characters of fire, and the wide vault of heaven, no longer lit by stars, seemed ablaze with those accusing words; all those words seemed Bible words, but every word I read seemed directed against me; nay, I felt that every word which proved me guilty, and condemned, proved me also self-condemned and without excuse, the hireling pastor of a Christian fold. I felt awhile as one spell-bound, unable to stir or to look up; at length, I did raise my eyes. I saw the Bible, and eagerly, but with trembling hands, I opened the book. Its leaves had been folded down in one place, and there it opened; a written paper was lying in that place. It was a prayer, quaintly but eloquently expressed, referring to the chapter where I found it, but a prayer that had been written, and no doubt offered up for me; my name was not there, but it was plain enough that I was meant. Kind, good old man! he had never spoken one reproving word to me; he had never taken upon himself, as many have done, to dictate to me; he had honoured my office, even while I dishonoured it; and in secret he had mourned over me, and prayed for me. The chapter to which the prayer referred, is one that I have had great reason to remember, it is the thirty-

third chapter of the Book of Ezekiel. I have read it at last, I hope, to some purpose. It had been hitherto as a dead letter to me; but this evening it was even as the sword of the Spirit to my soul, 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of my heart!' I cannot describe to you with what a force of agony these awful words affect me now. 'O son of man, I have set thee as a watchman unto the house Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand!' Understand me, Dora. John, and Ellen, my kind friends, you also must listen to me, and consider what I say. There is one, the enemy of our souls, to whom this name has been given by God himself, 'The murderer.' It is he against whom the watchman and minister of Christ is appointed to warn the people of His pasture; nay, the faithful pastor is not only to warn them against him, but to oppose and resist him stedfast in the faith, and strong in the strength of the Lord God. If he is a dumb watchman, or a faithless shepherd, and if the murderer of souls is allowed to go up and down though his fold, meeting not with the opposition of the pastor's watchfulness, the

pastor's prayer, the pastor's most unceasing exertions;—if, when the death blow is struck, the pastor is standing by, a calm, careless, unconcerned witness, standing so near that the blood of the victim gushes over him, but offering no resistance.—He who maketh inquisition for blood, He, the Lord himself, declares to us, that the blood of the victim He will require at the pastor's hand. I am the faithless pastor; I have stood by, the careless, unconcerned witness of the murderer's death-blows. I am stained with the blood of my own flock. The blood of the murdered will God require at my hand."

CHAPTER VI.

"And he served seven years, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had."—GENESIS, xxix. 20.

NIGEL's chief study had been to please every one, and the sweetness of his temper, and the kindness of his manners, had enabled him to succeed with many. Even those, who merely from spiritual pride, condemned him, and dictated to him, could not help owning, that he was kind and humble, and one or two individuals, of sour temper and aspect, who snarled in his presence, felt an unconscious liking towards him. There was, however, one whom he had not sought to please—the God whose minister and messenger he was. He had been hitherto among his people as an ambassador, that had forgotten, or cared not to deliver his royal Master's message. At length, he was awakened; and he became zealous, active, persevering, in his glorious service; serving neither for hire, nor from

duty, but for love, and heartily devoted to his high and sacred commission. It was now that Felix, the neglected friend, was remembered, and the forgotten letter searched for, and read, even with tears. He wrote to Felix, and his friend replied immediately to his letter.

"I don't know," said Felix, in his reply to Nigel's letter, "that I quite approve your extraordinary narration; your account of the mysterious murders committed at Dronfells. Perhaps, however, you could not have illustrated in a more striking way, the guilt of the hireling pastor, who, instead of being in readiness to give his life for the flock, stands by to witness the dreadful deeds of him who was a murderer from the beginning. You accuse yourself, Nigel, with deep anguish of spirit, but who is there among us, who ought not to confess, 'I too, have been in this sense a murderer?'

"We have in ourselves, no power to oppose our formidable adversary. But we are never called upon to oppose him in our own strength. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.' Thus when we are weak, these are stroug, and we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places; still, if we put on the whole

armour which God has provided, and wield the weapons he offers to our grasp, we shall be enabled to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, even to the delivering of our own souls, and the souls of those committed to our charge. Is it not very remarkable that throughout the word of God, blood is spoken of in so striking a manner?

"The blood of the body was evidently the type of the life of the soul. I am, perhaps, less disposed than you are to see a meaning which concerns ourselves in the types and figures of Scriptures, but he would be a very blind and very careless searcher of the word of God, who did not clearly discern the meaning of blood as a type. We cannot apprehend the full force of those words of St. Paul, 'I am pure from the blood of all men;' or, again, that far stronger passage, 'Feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood,' unless we turn to the Old Testament and consider these exhortations on the subject of blood.

"The sacrifice of Abel first of all teaches us, that without shedding of blood there was no acceptance with God; and every sacrifice offered up by the people of God, until the vail of the temple was rent, and the blood of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, was poured out for sinful man; every sacrifice teaches us the same doctrine. It appears that the blood of the animal was always held sacred on account of its typical meaning. When Noah was permitted to eat the flesh of ani-

mals, the blood was expressly forbidden; the words, are, 'the life thereof, which is the blood thereof.' Thus, again, at the twelfth of Deuteronomy, the charge is very solemnly given: 'Only be sure that thou eat not the blood, for the blood is the life.' Nay, if a beast or a fowl was caught in hunting, the blood was to be poured out and covered with dust. Surely this is not to be looked upon as an old unmeaning superstition, which related merely to the ceremonial worship and the domestic habits of the Jews. There was a spiritual meaning which extends and applies to ourselves.

"Such was the unspeakable love of God, that by the sacredness of blood, and the sacrificial shedding of blood, he shows us, not that He requires that the life of man should be given in sacrifice: but that the life of God incarnate should be paid as the costly ransom of man's redemption.

"I delight in these passages of Scripture, Nigel: never was the consideration of them so absolutely necessary as in the present day. There are so many who, while they profess to be members of our holy church, are in fact unconscious Socinians.

"Teach, then, the true doctrine on this point very plainly to your people. Repeat it line upon line, and precept upon precept. Shew them that He who was in the beginning with God, and was God, became flesh, and dwelt among us. Tell them that, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh; and He

who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. Shew them that Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life; and prove to them, from the written word, that the Father seeketh such to worship him, who honour the Son even as they honour the Father. Our hearers are not true members of the church of England, unless they address Jesus Christ as God the Son, who hath redeemed us with his most precious blood. The blood is the life. As the life of man had been forfeited, He who had decreed in his eternal purpose to redeem that life, would point out to our consideration, by the type of blood, and his commandments respecting it, the immense value of the life of the soul in his sight. And as the blood of the animal was forbidden to be tasted till the blood of the Mediator, Jesus Christ, had been shed: so, when he had made his soul an offering for sin, the command was directly reversed, and the dying injunction of our blessed Redeemer was, 'Drink of this blood of the new covenant; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.'"

Nigel felt the value of the friend whom he had so long neglected, and he continued to write to him for his advice and opinion. Nigel wrote to him on

another subject, in which he had become deeply interested — namely, as to the wisest way of preaching, in order to produce the fruits of good living, or godliness of life among his people. — "Your letter, my dear Nigel," he wrote in reply, "did not find me in my parish. I have been obliged to leave it. I am afraid I have had too much to do — too much, that is, for my bodily strength. My rector, who was always truly kind to me, has decided to keep another curate, besides my successor. I should not have made up my mind to leave Nunnington, had not my medical advisers insisted on my doing so. I thought it foolish to set up my opinion against theirs, and with an aching heart I came away. I am now at the house of our old and indulgent friend, the Bishop of ——. I see your look of astonishment at my words 'our old and indulgent friend;' for the news of the appointment can scarcely have reached you, nor will it till the post after that by which you receive my letter. Dr. Russell, our former tutor, is the new bishop. Perhaps no one was more surprised than himself at the appointment. He is to set out for London and for his see to-morrow. I have recovered my health sufficiently to take the charge of his parish in his absence; and as his church is so much smaller than the one I have left, I shall not feel much fatigue in doing the duty there. However, to return to your letter:

"We conversed on the subject of your question

the very day I heard from you, and that was more than a week ago. You would have been pleased had you seen the warm interest with which Dr. Russell, or I suppose I ought to say, the bishop, listened to your letter, for without waiting for your leave, I read it to him. I will give you the substance of much that he said. He would have written to you in my letter, had he not been called away; but he desired me to tell you with what pleasure he should welcome you to his new residence, when he has taken possession of it.

"You asked what kind of preaching appeared to me most effective in bringing men to godliness. There is but one way which God will honour. The apostolical way, of Christ crucified; the way which the glorious reformers and founders of our church so clearly set forth in our Articles, and in our Liturgy. The great question which every man has need to ask, How shall a man have peace with God? is answered by the apostle in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Romans — 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' This doctrine, as set forth in our eleventh Article, has well been called *Articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiæ*. We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; there-

fore that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification. Preach this doctrine, Nigel, plainly, but preach it faithfully, that is, in faithful accordance to the word of God. There can be no doubt, whatever some unsound and unscriptural writers may assert to the contrary, that this is the distinguishing doctrine of the Church of England, as it is of the church of Christ. For instance, here is the opinion of the wise, the learned Hooker — the judicious Hooker. You will find it in his discourse of Justification — 'There is a glorifying righteousness of men in the world to come, as there is a justifying and sanctifying righteousness here. The righteousness wherewith we shall be clothed in the world to come is both perfect and inherent. That whereby here we are justified is perfect, but not inherent; that whereby we are sanctified is inherent but not perfect.' 'Of the one,' he says again, (that is, the perfect, justifying righteousness) 'St. Paul doth prove, by Abraham's example, that we have it of faith without works: of the other (the inherent and sanctifying, but imperfect righteousness) St. James doth prove, by Abraham's example, that by works we have it, and not only by faith.' Dear Nigel, study to get clear and scriptural views on the great and vital doctrines of our holy faith; and do not give up the search as hopeless, because you do not clearly apprehend these things at first. Lu-

ther's rule is an admirable one, 'Bene orasse est bene studuisse:' or again, the rule on which Sir Isaac Newton acted with reference to his own philosophical pursuits, seems to me an admirable one to apply to the far higher study of the truth as it is in Jesus—the truth as it is in Him who is Himself the truth. 'I keep the subject,' he said, 'constantly before me, and wait till the first dawnings open slowly, by little and little, into a clear light.' I know, for my own part, how slowly I came to a clear view of this doctrine, and what confused statements I used to make about faith and works. I have learnt that the best way to preach, I will not say morality, but practical Christianity, is to use the method adopted by our Lord and his Apostles, to set before my hearers the doctrine that I find in the Bible, and to preach it as boldly, and at the same time as wisely as I find it delivered there.

"I would on no account neglect to preach the necessity of good works, but I would give them their proper place, and their proper character. As the fruits of faith, and as evidences of faith, they are indispensable; as the procuring cause of salvation, or as meritorious, they are utterly useless. At the same time, though they must not be put out of their proper order, they must be always urged upon the Christian hearer, and never forgotten, as they sometimes are, by preachers who presume to be wiser than St. Paul. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, for instance, though the Apostle treats of

high doctrinal questions in the former portion of his charge, he does not fail to urge upon them their sacred obligation to live a godly, righteous, and sober life. Only observe the first verse of each of the three last chapters, and it will appear plainly enough how practical his instructions are. 'I therefore beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called:' then again, 'Be ye followers of God as dear children;' and lastly, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.'

"He sets forth the scheme of Christian salvation in the clear order of which I am speaking, in the second chapter, at the eighth, ninth, and tenth verses; 'By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'

"Do not attempt, my own friend, to alter in any way, or to embellish the doctrine of 'Christ crucified.' Keep close to Scripture. You will find, that, as Cecil has declared, Christ is God's grand ordinance; and if you would preach successfully, and so as to fix the attention of your hearers strongly on their everlasting concerns (I borrow here the splendid language of Robert Hall), no peculiar refinement of thought, no subtilty of reasoning, much less the pompous exaggerations of secu-

lar eloquence, are wanted for that purpose: you have only to imbibe deeply the mind of Christ, to let His doctrine enlighten, His love inspire your heart, and your situation, in comparison of other speakers, will resemble that of the angel of the Apocalypse, who was seen standing in the sun. Draw your instructions immediately from the Bible. Let them be taken fresh from the spring. Do not satisfy yourself with the study of Christianity in narrow, jejune abridgments and systems, but contemplate it in its utmost extent, as it subsists in the sacred oracles; and, in investigating these, you will permit your reason and conscience an operation, as free and unfettered as if none had examined them before. The neglect of this produces, too often, an artifical scarcity, where some of the choicest provisions of the household are exploded or overlooked."

CHAPTER VII.

" Hail to the spiritual fabric of her church,
Founded in truth, by blood of martyrdom
Cemented; by the hands of Wisdom reared
In beauty of holiness, with ordered pomp,
Decent and unreproved. . . . . .
The poet, fostering for his native land
Such hope, entreats that servants may abound
Of those pure altars worthy; ministers
Detached from pleasure, to the love of gain
Superior, insusceptible of pride,
And by ambition's longings undisturbed;
Men whose delight is where their duty leads
Or fixes them; whose least distinguished day
Shines with some portion of that heavenly lustre
Which makes the Sabbath lovely in the sight
Of blessed angels; pitying human cares."

Wordsworth's Excursion.

FELIX was alone in his study: he was on his knees, and the Holy Bible lay before him open. His eyes were fixed upon the sacred volume, and his heart was drinking in the living waters from that well-spring of life and holiness.

He was filled with humble but admiring astonishment, in considering the change which had been wonderfully wrought in the once bigoted and persecuting Saul, of whom so affecting a description is given in the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. He turned back to the account which is given of the death of the blessed Stephen, and read, that the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul; he read the account of Saul making havoc of the church, and entering into every house, in the heat of his savage zeal, haling men and women, and committing them to prison; and when he compared this cruel and superstitious man with the humble, heavenly-minded St. Paul, counting all things but loss for the knowledge of Christ Jesus, he felt that there is indeed a reality in that change which is wrought by the unseen Spirit of God; and he blessed God that he had been at length brought to see the necessity of that change, and to pray with all his heart for the fellowship of that Spirit, by whom alone the dead in trespasses and sins can see life. "Can this be the same man," he said to himself, as he read of Paul, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, going bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that should befall him there, save that the Holy Ghost witnessed in every city, that bonds and afflictions waited for him, telling his beloved friends that he knew that they should

see his face no more; and then, in a strain of wonderful and majestic solemnity, exclaiming, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men — for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood."

It might have been said of Nigel, also, "What hath God wrought!" He had never been a savage, persecuting zealot; but he had been a Gallio, caring for none of those things which are, to the true disciple of Christ Jesus, dearer than life itself. A change had begun to take place in him, and an abiding one. He had received the kingdom of God, not merely in word, but in power; and it was hidden in his heart, even like leaven, silently, but gradually working till the whole is leavened.

As Nigel knelt in that study, he thought of the aged pastor, to whose charge he had succeeded, and whose flock he had long so fearfully neglected. He thought, that perhaps, on the very spot where he was then kneeling, the good old man had often knelt and prayed, with tears upon his venerable face, for the flock he was about to leave, and for the shepherd to whose care his beloved sheep should be committed. Nigel thought of what had been indeed the case. In that quiet study Mr. Evelyn had often, very often, poured forth his whole soul

in prayer, not only for his flock, but for their future pastor— very often had his daughter found him bathed in tears, and been told, in reply to her anxious inquiries, that he was well himself, quite well in bodily health,—that he was not suffering from any bad news which had been brought to him, but that he was thinking of his youthful successor — of him who should be called to feed his long-loved flock; and he had added — "Join your prayers to mine, dear child, that he may come unto this fold by the only door, by Christ, who is not only the great shepherd of the sheep, but the door of the fold; by Him, if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture. Pray with me, that he may love His sheep, even with the love of our Master, who gave his life for the sheep; pray with me, that he may be no hireling, leaving the sheep, caring not for the sheep — pray that he may be one whose voice the sheep may hear and know, and follow, leading them forth to the still clear waters and the green pastures, where only He can feed the sheep of God.

The prayers of the good old pastor had been granted; for, assuredly, the change which had taken place in Nigel was partly in answer to the prayers of Mr. Evelyn, as well as to those of his own dying mother, who had, with such confiding faith, committed her little son to her Saviour and her God. As Nigel became better acquainted with the gentle Miss Evelyn, whose friendship and whose society he now earnestly sought, he heard from her of her

father's prayers; and he learnt from her how he might best follow up many of her father's plans, and walk in the steps of his pure and blameless life. He became meek and lowly in heart, and full of tender sympathy for others; willing cheerfully to deny himself, and to give up his own selfish will for the good of others.

A decided change had taken place in the habits, as well as in the sentiments of Nigel. Before, he had always seemed in a hurry, when duties were to be attended to, though he had found leisure enough for hours of trifling. Now, he had time, patience, kindness for the lowest of his flock. He seemed to be always among them. The aged and the sick began to tell of his gentleness and tenderness, and how ready he was to perform any little office of kindness for them, and to wait upon them, as a child waiting upon its mother. It was said throughout the parish, that a second Mr. Evelyn had come among his people; one who preached his Lord's message faithfully from the pulpit, and from house to house, being himself a true and godly pattern of the faith he taught.

It is said of Lord Lyttleton, and his friend Mr. West, that they each agreed to write an essay, to prove that they were upheld by the truth in their disbelief of the Bible. They were both honest inquirers — and, through the mercy of God, their rash design ended in their both becoming sincere believers. The essay of Lord Lyttleton was his celebrated Treatise on the Conversion of St. Paul,

of which it has been said, that, as a scheme of argument, there are few nobler products of education and intelligence — few systems of religion more settling and convincing, in the whole compass of theological disquisition. The essay of Gilbert West was his valuable work on the resurrection of our Lord, which every one knows has been of the most important service to many a doubtful inquirer. If such is the effect of studying the Scriptures, upon the merely honest inquirer, with what incalculable benefit did Nigel search the revealed word of God! there is, indeed no method so admirably suited for building up the Christian teacher in his most holy faith, and fitting him to teach and to guide his hearers, as the unceasing study of the word of God; comparing Scripture with Scripture, and using commentators (if using them at all) only as hand-maidens to the word of truth. "I used to study commentators and systems," said Cecil; "but I am come almost wholly at length to the Bible. I find in the Bible, the more I read, a grand peculiarity, that seems to say 'I stand alone. The great and the wise shall never exhaust my treasures by figures and parables. I will come down to the feelings and understandings of the ignorant. Leave me as I am, but study me incessantly.'"

"You often wish to know something about the state of affairs in our church at present," said Nigel, to his friend Miss Evelyn; "and you often ask me questions about my friend Mr. Leslie. Here is

a letter from him, and you will see in it some of his opinions about church matters."

"My dear Nigel.—In the midst of the attacks which are now made against our sacred Church, I have been much gratified by an event which has lately taken place in my family.

"You may, perhaps, remember my uncle and guardian who was present at our ordination. You saw but little of him, for he was obliged to leave me, within a few hours of our coming out of the cathedral, to return home on business. He was at that time a Dissenter; but he, and the congregation to which he belonged, are come over in a body to the Church of England. I have been much impressed by his reasons for seceding from the Dissenters. They are in many respects similar to those which influenced the excellent Mr. Hey, of Leeds, when he quitted the Dissenters and became a member of the established Church. I will not attempt to enter into this subject at large with you, at least in a letter, but I recommend you on many accounts to add Pearson's Life of Hey to your library. It will amply repay your reading. I only wish the book were better known than it is among the readers of the present day. One of his observations has been lately verified in a remarkable way. Where a congregation has the sole power of choosing their own minister, and expelling him when chosen, a larger succession of pious ministers is

indeed to be expected, but should the people—(I alter his language, but not his argument),—but should the people become Socinians, how is their recovery to be effected? Not by their minister, for such people will never choose a Christian minister, in the true sense of the word Christian; they will even reject such a one should he, after being chosen, begin seriously to preach that Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life, and that God hath purchased the Church with His own blood. A Socinian congregation will be certain to choose none but a Socinian minister. It is a fact, as you know, Nigel, that many of those chapels where Presbyterian congregations once assembled, and Presbyterian pastors once preached the truth without any mixture of error, have become decidedly nnd avowedly Socinian.

"He has, indeed, come over to the established Church on conviction, considering, he says, our Church to be less imperfect than any other establishment, and feeling convinced that an establishment is absolutely necessary in such a world as ours, even in that part of it which is nominally Christian.

"As to the voluntary system (as it is called,) I hope it will never take the place of an established church in this country. I have read with much interest, the remarks of the celebrated American divine, Dr. Dwight, on this subject, as given in a

very useful little volume* entitled, 'Essays on the Church.' To tell you the truth, Nigel, I had always supposed in my ignorance, owing to the triumphant appeals to America which have been so frequently made in various books and by various persons as ignorant, it seems, as myself, that the voluntary system had met with wonderful success there. Dr. Dwight brings forward the result of the experiment, as it has been tried, not merely in large cities, but in Connecticut and in the States south of New England. In those states in which Christianity was established by law, the Presbyterian ministers supported and settled, were in the proportion of *one* to every thirteen hundred and sixty-four inhabitants; while in those states in which the voluntary system prevailed, the settled and supported ministers of the same class were only in the proportion of one to every nineteen thousand three hundred. Observe, in the one case it is one in proportion to hundreds, in the other, one in proportion to thousands. In Connecticut, to use Dr. Dwight's own words, 'every inhabitant who is not precluded by disease or inclination, may hear the gospel and celebrate the public worship of God every Sabbath. In the States specified, it is not improbable that a number of people several times as great as the census of

* Published by Seeley. The Essays appeared originally in the Christian Guardian.

Connecticut, have scarcely heard a sermon or a prayer in their lives. If,' he adds, 'we at the same time advert to the peace, the good order, the regular distribution of justice, the universal existence of schools, the universal enjoyment of the education which they communicate, and the extension of superior education, it will be difficult for a sober man not to perceive that the smiles of Heaven have regularly accompanied this system from its commencement to the present time.' Dr. Chalmers, in his work on 'Endowments,' mentions another striking fact, 'that in New Hampshire, the law of a compulsory provision for the teachers of Christianity has recently been abolished, and with this effect, that in many instances, where a chapel has become vacant by the death of the incumbent, his place has not been supplied; and the district which enjoyed his services, now left without any Sabbath ministrations whatever, gives melancholy attestation to the native listlessness and unconcern of its families.' It might be objected that the establishments referred to were not Episcopal but Presbyterian; but I would say, if we cannot have an Episcopal establishment which I approve with the best judgment of my reason, and love with all my heart above every other, let us have the next best to it, only let us have an establishment. Dr. Chalmers, in a sermon which I heard him preach, makes a statement very similar to that which I have just given, with regard to the Highlands of

Scotland. In about a hundred years, he said, in a population of about half a million, the whole fruit of the voluntary system has not exceeded six churches wherein the Gaelic service is performed. 'The establishment,' he continued, 'has contributed one hundred and sixty churches to that people, and within these few years, when forty government churches were decreed, these being followed up by a pure and conscientious exercise of the patronage, are now filled up with as many flourishing congregations.' You know I am only a curate myself, Nigel, but I was highly gratified by another part of Dr. Chalmers' sermon. 'The popular cry at this moment is—(I give you the words as nearly as I can recollect them,)—for the application of the revenues of the church to the support of the working clergy. This can have no effect in Scotland; for, unfortunately for us, by the ravenous and unprincipled spoliation of our church, which took place at the Reformation from popery, there has nothing been left in the shape of those higher inducements, which, however they may have provoked the hostile feelings of persons who do not calculate on all the ends of a church (because not aware of them), are, nevertheless, indispensable; that leisure, and independence, and sufficiency, without which a thorough professional education cannot be administered, and a thorough professional literature cannot be upheld. There is a risk in this age of demand for mere menial and personal labour, with a

total insensibility to the prerogatives and the necessities of mental and intellectual labour, lest the love of theology be altogether despised. Not that we look on a highly erudite Scripture criticism to be indispensable as an instrument of discovery into the sense and meaning of the Bible — but we look on it to be indispensable as an instrument of defence. In the peaceful and ordinary seasons of the church, their services may not be needed; but when danger threatens, and an attack is feared from heresy or false doctrine, then the church does with her critics and her philologists what the state does with her fleets that are lying in ordinary — she puts them into commission; and to these lettered and highly accomplished ecclesiastics, more than to any blind hereditary veneration on the part of the people, does she owe it, that both the Arian and the Socinian heresies have been kept from her borders.'

" I am not at all disposed to allow that there is necessarily more godliness of life among Dissenters than among members of the Church of England; but I have heard many of our clergymen complain, that, no sooner do many in their congregations become religious persons, than they pass over to the ranks of the Dissenters. Now I am quite aware that a love of change and excitement may influence some; but I really lay much of the blame upon ourselves. We often treat our own admirable mode of worship as if we were ashamed of it; or,

if my language is too strong in saying so, I may at least assert that we do not give it the importance due to it; we do not explain it to our people, showing that there is scarcely a part of it which is not well and wisely chosen. We do not remind our hearers or ourselves that, though the length of our prayers may be tedious to those who would say of any mode of worship, 'What a weariness it is!' it ought to be a recommendation to those who are spiritually-minded; so that the fault might be pointed to, rather in the disposition of the worshipper than in the mode of the worship. The eloquent Jeremy Taylor has truly said, 'The greatest danger that the Prayer Book ever had, was the indifferency and indevotion of them that used it but as a common blessing. And they who thought it fit for the meanest of the clergy to read prayers, and for themselves only to preach (though they might innocently intend it), yet did not in that action consult the honour of our Liturgy. But when excellent things go away, and then look back upon us, as our blessed Saviour did upon St. Peter, we are more moved than by the nearer embraces of a full and actual possession.' Surely it is chiefly our own fault that our congregations so generally undervalue the services of our Common Prayer. Would that we could see the days return, of which Hooker speaks with his grave majesty of language—'When the house of prayer was as a court beau-

tified with the presence of celestial powers — there,' said he, 'we stand, there we pray, we sound forth hymns to God, having his angels intermixed as our associates. How can we come to the House of Prayer, and not be moved with the very glory of the place itself, so to frame our affections, praying, as doth best beseem them whose suits the Almighty doth sit there to hear, and His angels attend to further?' When this was engrafted on the minds of men, the warning sound was no sooner heard, but the churches were presently filled, the pavements covered with bodies, prostrate, and washed with their tears of devout joy. Alas! I often contrast one of our modern congregations with an old and delicately etched engraving by Hollar, the frontispiece to a little 'Rationale on the Book of Common Prayer, by Anthony Sparrow.' It is the representation of a Church of England congregation, all meekly kneeling — the men on one side, and the women on the other, and the minister kneeling in the midst. The authority of his place, the fervour of his zeal, and the piety and gravity of his behaviour seeming exceedingly to grace and set forth the service he doth.

"These are, indeed, rare excellencies of our Book of Common Prayer. I do entirely agree with Mr. Hey, of Leeds, in his opinion of our church services, where he says, 'that even an immoral or ill-principled minister in the Church of England is condemned by his own prayers; the defects of his

sermons are supplied by other parts of his office, or his errors are contradicted by them.'

"Here is a long letter, dear Nigel! made up, too, you will say, of quotations; but you know such is my dull, slow way of writing, that I often like to express my own opinions, by the choicer language of those with whom I agree; and so, to conclude, in the same style, here is a wish and prayer: —

"God grant that a Church, which has now for nearly three centuries, amidst every extravagance of doctrine and discipline which has spent itself around her, still carried herself as the mediator, chastening the zealot by words of soberness, and animating the lukewarm by words that burn — that a Church which has been found on experience to have successfully promoted a quiet and unobtrusive and practical piety amongst the people; such as comes not of observation, but is seen in the conscientious discharge of all those duties of imperfect obligation which are the bonds of peace, but which the laws cannot reach — that such a Church may live through these troubled times to train up our children in the fear of God, when we are in our graves; and that no strong delusion sent amongst us may prevail to her overthrow, and to the eventual discomfiture (as they would find too late for their cost) of many who have thoughtlessly and ungratefully lifted up their heel against her!" *

* See Blunt on the Reformation, p. 233.

CHAPTER VIII.

> "Prayer is living with God; and, if founded upon right principles of religion, puts us upon searching the heart, leads us to the knowledge of our wants and weakness, and fixes us in dependence upon God. Prayer brings God into the heart, and keeps sin out."
>
> ADAM'S PRIVATE THOUGHTS.

NIGEL closed his book; the sun was setting, and he rose up to leave his quiet study. The cool air felt delightful to him after the heat of the day; it came from the west, dimpling the clear calm waters of the lake, and gently agitating the flowers in his beautiful garden. They had hung their heads all the day long under the sultry sun, but the heat and the glare had passed away, and the gentle dews of evening were beginning to freshen every delicate blossom. Nigel walked onward by the terrace to the end of the garden; but, as he passed under the little archway of roses, which had been twined there by the hands of Miss Evelyn,

before he unlocked the garden-gate he stopped to gather a bouquet of musk-roses. They were just coming into blossom. Dora Vernon loved them, and they grew no where so luxuriously as in the rectory-garden at Dronfells. He hastened on, till he stood upon a lofty platform among the rocks. The grass had there been kept fine and short by the mountain-sheep, and the pure fragrance of many a bed of wild thyme scented the fresh breeze that blew around him. It was one of those evenings when there is no twilight; when the moon hangs in the sky, as a lamp already lighted, at first pale and white, and scarcely luminous; but as the last splendour of daylight passes away, brightening into clear and radiant lustre.

Nigel scarcely noted that the night was come, till he saw his own shadow opposed to a light, more lamp-like than that of the day; and then he looked up into the clear broad expanse of the darkened sky; he looked around on the mountains, and the venerable groves, and the calm surface of the lake, and his own pleasant dwelling-place; and his heart swelled with adoration and gratitude towards Him who made his lot so happy, causing his 'lines to fall in such pleasant places.' Not long before, his eye and his heart would have stopped here. They now passed onward, even with a deeper interest, to many a cluster of low mean dwellings, to the abodes of poverty, and wretchedness, and sin; and as he stood there, and thought upon Him who

gladly endured afflictions, and neglect, and insult, for the love he bore to sinners, Nigel prayed for more of His spirit, His love, His patience, His deep and heartfelt sympathy with the lowest and the vilest of his fellows.

Nigel was on his way to Castle Vernon. He had not seen Dora for many days. She had been paying a visit in the neighbourhood, and he had occupied himself with double diligence about his parish, during the whole morning, that he might give up the evening to her delightful society. His quiet musings were broken in upon by a voice that screamed after him. He turned his head, and beheld the toiling form and the heated face of a huge overgrown girl, who was ascending by the path from the parsonage, calling out to him at every step, in a voice as familiar in its expressions, as it was unpleasant in its sound, to stop and to come back. There are some young persons, from whose manner of addressing you, it is easy to discover that they have been brought up in the midst of a household reverencing neither God nor his ministers ; and Nigel was now addressed by such a person. The girl handed to him a note, which, from its wet wafer, had been evidently written but a short time, and the note contained a request, which was almost a command, that he would come immediately to see the wife of the writer, for she had been ill during the last fortnight ; it concluded by an expression of wonder, that Mr. Forester had so

long neglected Mrs. Bandon, and a hint that if he still delayed to visit Prospect Cottage, Mr. Bandon would certainly send for Mr. Smithson, the dissenting minister. Poor Nigel stared at the note, and at the bearer, who returned his stare. He gave a glance to the towers and terraces of Castle Vernon, and unconsciously tearing off the corner of the note, to which the wet wafer was affixed, he quietly walked forward in the direction of Prospect Cottage, a distance of three miles; its walls of glaring white, from their lofty situation, appearing in the distance far over heath, and wood, and valley. He found that he was not to be favoured with the company of Miss Bandon, who had some commissions to execute at the Shop, as it was called, par excellence, at Dronfells. Nigel had then heard, for the first time, of the serious illness of Mrs. Bandon. He knew, also, that she was a very difficult person to deal with. He had often visited her, but with little or no good effect. The only subject on which she liked to speak was her bodily ailments, and she had always endeavoured to turn the conversation, when Nigel spoke to her on the only object of a Christian minister's visits.

At length he stood at the door of Prospect Cottage, a tall comfortless dwelling, standing on the summit of a bare, bleak hill, with not a tree within half a mile of it, except the few weather-beaten saplings which had been planted when the house was built, and which would probably grow up to shelter it,

about the time that the edifice, which was slightly and badly built, was falling to pieces.

Nigel stood at the door waiting to be admitted. He had rapped loudly, but no servants seemed to be within hearing. Voices were, however, to be heard, which seemed to proceed from an upper chamber; he soon discovered, what he had often suspected, that Mrs. Bandon was a terrible scold. She was then pouring forth a volley of abuse upon her unfortunate husband, whose low and grumbling expostulations only produced fresh bursts of violence from her.

"Can this be the sick woman?" said Nigel to himself; "what a power of tongue!" At length Mr. Bandon descended the stairs, called down by the increasing loudness of Nigel's repeated knocks, who had no wish to overhear the disputes of the husband and wife. Mr. Bandon was a very spiritless sort of man, who was entirely ruled by his wife, but who was always ready, when she permitted him, to assume a tone of authority, and this she did occasionally, when she was in a peculiarly pleasant mood. Indeed, she often insisted on his adopting her own imperious ways towards others; and had dictated the note which he had written to Nigel.

"Mrs. Bandon is in a very poor way," said the husband, "and I don't know what will be the end of it, if she continues in her present state. If you will step into the parlour I will go and prepare her for your presence." Soon after Mr. Bandon

passed the parlour door on his way to his wife's chamber, with a brimming tumbler of brandy and water, which he sipped occasionally, to prevent it, he said to himself, from spilling.

"Well, my good sir," said Mrs. Bandon, as Nigel entered her room, "you are come to a poor *debiliatated*, shaking creature. I'm very bad. It's almost over with me. I shall never rise from this bed, as I tell my poor man. Take a seat, sir; Jonathan Bandon, where are your manners, to let the gentleman stand?"—"Why did you wish to see me, Mrs. Bandon?" said Nigel. "Dear me, dear me," she replied, "to get you to pray for me. I am very uncomfortable, and a prayer would do me good; let me hear you read one."—"I am quite ready to pray for you, or rather with you," said he, "but you must tell me what to pray for." Mrs. Bandon lifted her head from the pillow, and opened her half-closed eyes in a stare upon him, as if she had not rightly heard what he said.—"Pray for!" she cried at length; "why, sir, you know what to pray for, better than I can tell you! Well! did I ever hear such a thing? I am sure I could not tell you what I would wish you to pray for."—"I mean what I say," replied Nigel, mildly; "I am come to your chamber, not to pray for myself, but for you; therefore the question is not, what shall I ask for myself? but for you?"—"Well, well," she replied, turning her head first on one side, and then on the other, with a little

murmuring whine, as if half provoked at being obliged to answer his question; "Well, I am very ill, very ill—pray for this, pray that God will make me well."—"Though you must tell me what I am to ask," said Nigel, "we must neither of us forget to whom we are about to make our request, and we must ask according to his will. I will pray (if you wish me to do so,) that, should it be His blessed will, you may get well. But it may be His will, for the very love He bears you, to bring you very low in bodily health and strength. It is right in you to bid the doctor who attends to your bodily health, do his best to make you well; but surely he who comes in the name of the good Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ, to attend to your immortal soul, surely he has higher things to seek, than the health of the corruptible body. I would wish to make some better prayer for you than this."—"Why, dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Bandon, raising her voice, "what a man you are! I told you I was a bad hand at answering such out-o'the-way questions as yours. Well, if I must say what I would have you pray for, pray that we may gain our lawsuit, and see the downfall of that niece of mine, and that vile canting fellow, her husband. I should like to see them humbled to the dust. I would give a thousand pounds of that very money to know that they were rotting in a prison."—"Mrs. Bandon," said Nigel, mildly, "you don't mean what you say; you are angry, and perhaps

with some show of justice; but you let the violence of your passion carry you away. You are not a revengeful woman, and I am quite sure, that if your relations were once brought down to want and wretchedness, none would be more ready to relieve them than yourself. To utter such a wish as that which I have just heard, is wicked; to make that wish a prayer, would be horrible. The lesson that He, who prayed for His murderers, has taught you, is in a very different spirit; it is this: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."—"Ah, well," exclaimed Mrs. Bandon, "if we lose that lawsuit, we may say, good bye to all our comforts. 'Tis the fret and the worry of this affair that has brought me to the state I am in, and laid me here as weak as water, without the heart to get up from my sick bed. Oh! I shall never get over it, I fear. See how I am wasted; see how I am wasted!" and as she spoke, she drew up her sleeve, and bared an arm which, if wasted, must have been, before its reduction, of no ordinary dimensions. "Dear me! dear me! if it goes wrong with us in that hateful lawsuit, what shall we do? what could we come to this wilderness of a place for? Mr. B. talks of the joys of a rural life, but for my part I think a genteel business, such as we had in the shell-fish line, was not to be thrown up, with little or no consideration made by them that slipped into our place.

As I tell Mr. B., he may say what he pleases of his pleasure in the country, but he is like a fish out of water." — " I see that you are uneasy and unwell," said Nigel, " and I would recommend you to seek patience and a spirit of cheerful submission to the will of God." — " And try and get up," continued Mr. Bandon, who had been seated very quietly in a corner of the room, but who now rose and addressed his wife in a coaxing tone — " try and get up, and rouse yourself, my dear lamb, and I hope you will soon be better." — The wife's reply was not given in a lamb-like spirit, and it silenced her husband, who quitted the room. Nigel was about to follow him, after taking his leave of Mrs. Bandon; but she cried out, " My good sir, we have not had your prayer yet — stop a bit, I beg, and kneel down?" — " I would say to you," replied Nigel, mildly, but very firmly, " as I said when I entered this room, you must tell me what I am to pray for — and, should it be right for me to offer up your prayer to the most holy God, I will do so with all my heart." — " I see what you drive at," she cried, not caring to restrain her anger, " and you drive me out of all patience. You want to make me own that I am a sinner; but I am not going to own any such thing — I am not such a mean-spirited thing as that comes to." — " Mrs. Bandon," said Nigel, " if you would be a little less violent, I should be able to respect you more than I can at present.

Do not misunderstand me — I never pretended to convince you that you are a sinner, that is God's work, and His Spirit can alone convince you of sin. But I am sure of one thing, that you know you are not happy; nor can you be happy till the cause of your unhappiness is removed. That cause is not the lawsuit, nor the dread of a change in worldly circumstances — it must be looked for in yourself." — "Well, well," she said, impatiently, interrupting him, "I don't want to hear any more canting." — "I will go at once," said Nigel — "you shall not be troubled by me any longer; but tell me, before I leave you, what you expected me to do, when you sent for me?"* — "What I expected you to do! — why, to be sure, I expected you to kneel down, without asking any questions, and read me a good comfortable prayer, and then go." — "You do not wish me to remain longer with you?" asked Nigel. — "No, sir, it is not convenient; when I find it more convenient I may send for you. Dear me, dear me — I dare say I shall not sleep a wink to-night."

As Nigel was quitting the house, he caught a glimpse of Mr. Bandon, who had been summoned by his wife's well-known scream, slowly ascending the stairs with another tumbler of brandy and water.

* There may be more truth in this account than the reader might suppose, though the circumstances related did not happen in the presence of the author.

CHAPTER IX.

" Death may leave all the possessions untouched, but he will lay his rude and his resistless hand on the possessor. The house may stand in castellated pride for many generations, and the domain may smile for many ages in undiminished beauty; but in less, perhaps, than half a generation, death will shoot his unbidden way to the inner apartment, and, without spoiling the lord of his property, he will spoil the property of its lord. It is not his way to tear the parchment and the rights of investiture from the hands of the proprietor; but to paralyze, and so unlock the hands, and then they fall like useless and forgotten things away from him." — Dr. Chalmers.

Why is the minister of Christ looked upon as a gloomy visitor?

He ought to be welcomed as the messenger of life and joy, and, when he is seated beside the bed of expiring mortality, in the midst of the accompaniments of decay and death, he should seem to us as the angel who was found sitting upon the stone which had been rolled away from the sepulchre of our Lord. The ministering man is as much the *angellos*, or messenger of the Lord, as the " ministering Spirit;" for, though weak and sinful

in himself, which the angel is not, he bears the same glorious commission from the same Redeemer; he tells the same glad tidings—that Christ is risen; the Lord of Hosts, the King of Glory, hath brought life and immortality to life, and, through death, hath conquered him that had the power of death, namely, Satan.

Sorrow, disease, death, and sin, the source of all misery, would they not have been found in this fallen world if no Redeemer had appeared; if no preacher had been sent forth with the glad Gospel message?

At some distance from the lake, and on the opposite side to Castle Vernon, stood Chilton-hall, the favourite residence of Lord Daventry.

Nigel had dined there occasionally; but he never entered the house without a feeling of being oppressed with form, and state, and ceremonial pride. Every thing and every one was grand. Lord Daventry was condescendingly grand. Lady Daventry haughtily grand; the Miss Daventrys and their brother coldly grand; the servants insufferably grand. The house, notwithstanding its barrack-like proportions, had an imposing and stately grandeur about it. Whether it was from ignorance, or want of good sense, or from some more pitiable weakness of heart, rather than of head, Nigel could not help observing, that the Daventrys scarcely ever noticed a person whom they thought

below their estimate, as to birth and station. It had been reported, since the time that Nigel came to Dronfells, that Lord Daventry's health was failing, but he had not appeared at any time to be seriously ill, till a few weeks before Nigel received the following note :—

" Lady Daventry presents her compliments to Mr. Forester, and desires that he will attend at Chilton-hall, to-morrow, at one o'clock, to administer the sacrament to Lord Daventry, who is extremely ill."—Lord Daventry was indeed dangerously ill, and Nigel had called several times at Chilton-hall, but he had not been admitted. He could not help fearing, that Lord Daventry was not in a right state to receive the holy sacrament. He scarcely knew how to act; but he replied immediately to Lady Daventry's note, saying that he hoped to wait upon Lord Daventry at the appointed hour, and he made his appearance at Chilton-hall, at one o'clock on the following day.

He was received by Lady Daventry with somewhat less than her usual haughtiness of manner. " You are very obliging in being so exactly punctual to your time, sir," she said, " every thing is ready, but Lord Daventry is just now in a quiet doze. Will you be so good as to wait till he awakes ? I will go up to his chamber, and send down to request your attendance very shortly."—" I should wish," said Nigel, " to have some little conversation with his lordship, before I administer the holy

Sacrament to him. Will your ladyship be so good as to say this to him?"—Lady Daventry was leaving the room, but she turned back, at Nigel's words, and looking him full in the face, said, in a firm and decided voice. "I would on no account take such a message to Lord Daventry. He is perfectly prepared, and I beg nothing may be said to disturb him."—"I desire Lord Daventry's happiness, with all my heart," replied Nigel, "and"—Lady Daventry interrupted him, exclaiming in the same decided tone, "He is happy, at least surprisingly calm and composed; and he tells me, he has no doubt but he shall be much more so, when he has received the Sacrament."—"Has his lordship been in the habit of receiving the holy Sacrament?" said Nigel. "I do not remember to have administered it to him at our parish church, where I believe he has attended occasionally."—"His lordship has not received the Sacrament," replied Lady Daventry; "but I generally attend on the great festivals, and it is at my particular request that he has now expressed his wish to see you."

All this was said, with a manner so unbending and frigid, that Nigel (though he might have been unwilling to own the fact, even to himself,) scarcely knew how to proceed. It is easy enough, when reading an account of his situation, to decide how he ought to have felt, and what he ought to have done; and in the mere words of Lady Daventry there was little difficult to answer; but all the as-

sociations with which she, and her lord, and her whole household stood connected, impressed him with a kind of awestruck restraint, which he despised himself for feeling, and yet continued to feel. He had all that high-bred courtesy about him, which the Daventry family were so lamentably in want of; and he now possessed what was far better, that spirit of love and tenderness which is the peculiar grace of the Christian character. He could not bear to hurt the feelings, even of the most unkind and churlish, remembering that his was peculiarly a gentle pastor's office, and that his great Exemplar never broke the bruised reed. He felt certain, that under all her repulsive and chilling haughtiness, Lady Daventry was feeling keenly. What wife at the bedside of a dying husband could be otherwise than keenly and deeply tried? Long after Lady Daventry had left the room, Nigel continued standing in deep and silent thoughtfulness; he was alone and unobserved, and feeling his weakness, he knelt down and prayed very humbly, but very earnestly for wisdom. As he did so, the words of the Apostle immediately occurred to him: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." "The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." "This is what I need," said Nigel; and the

prayer he offered was, that he might be taught and led by the Holy Spirit to speak the truth, even with the meekness of such holy wisdom, in his interview with Lord Daventry.

Nigel was shocked at the alteration which had taken place in Lord Daventry since he had last seen him. "I am almost worn out with disease and suffering, Mr. Forester," he said, in a low voice, "though I certainly feel much refreshed by the half hour's repose, which I have just enjoyed. I fear I have been trespassing upon your valuable time."—He added soon after, "I do not expect to recover; I hope I am resigned to death. I have no pleasure in any thing, and I hope soon to be at rest."—"I would fain hope," replied Nigel, with much gentleness of manner, "that you have made your peace with God."—"I have, sir, or I should rather say, I know not what occasion there was for my doing so. I have never been otherwise than at peace with Him."—"We may be quite sure, that our Heavenly Father is full of love towards us," said Nigel mildly, "for He has so loved the world, as to give the most astonishing proof that even God could give. He has given his own Son. He is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Nay, He is even found of them that seek Him not. You say that you are at peace with God, and have never been otherwise than at peace with Him. There are two kinds of peace —a false peace, and the peace of God. Will your lordship search into your own heart, and judge for

yourself which is the peace which you possess? It is of the deepest importance to yourself, that on such a point no mistake should be made."—"Sir," said Lord Daventry, "I am extremely obliged to you for your anxiety, and for your instructions; and I should be still more obliged to you, if you would at once commence the service for the Sacrament.—Lady Daventry, has Carter put every thing in right order? Carter, you need not wait."—"Carter is not here," said Lady Daventry; "she left the room when Mr. Forester entered. You desired her to do so,—every thing is quite ready, and I am surprised that Mr. Forester should think it necessary to make this delay. He already knows my opinion, but he did not choose to attend to my request." There was a pause,—and after it had continued for above a minute, Lady Daventry, who had knelt down, and whose eyes had been fixed on her prayer-book, looked up. Nigel was still standing—he continued to stand in silence, till at last Lady Daventry rose up. "Mr. Forester," she said, "this is the most extraordinary conduct on your part. Do you refuse to administer the Sacrament to Lord Daventry?"—"I do not refuse," replied Nigel, colouring deeply, and speaking in a very low but distinct voice, "but I cannot tell what to do? Lord Daventry is very ill, and it would be a kind of savage cruelty in me, to add in any way to his sufferings. Were I to follow my own inclination, I should yield to a cowardly spirit,

which I confess I feel within me. I should please him at this present time. I should ask no questions, quietly administer the Sacrament, and depart." As Nigel continued speaking, he became perfectly calm, and his self-possession was so quietly, so gently steadfast, that its influence was felt by both his auditors.

"Your lordship may be now at peace with God, but it cannot be that you have always been so. There is but one kind of peace worthy of the name; that peace the world cannot give. It was lost to man, till the most costly sum was paid to restore it to his possession—the price of the blood of God. We read in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans,* I perfectly remember the words, 'that He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;' and then it is added, 'therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is this peace, and no other, which will stand you in stead at the judgment bar of God."

Lady Daventry had thrown herself into a large arm-chair when Nigel began to speak, and had taken up a volume, which, from its peculiar style of binding, appeared to belong to some lending library in town; it was one of the novels of the day. She read, or seemed to read, but for a few minutes, then casting the book aside, she rose up

* Romans, end of 4th chapter and beginning of 5th.

with a look of uncontrollable impatience, and words of angry defiance were evidently almost on her lips. But she checked herself, and surveying Nigel with a stare of haughty indifference, she passed him in silence. She stood at the foot of the bed, and said to her husband, "Lord Daventry, would you like me to write those letters for you? I am at leisure now." Did Nigel feel affronted, and inclined to resent the insult that was offered him? he did not. Did he look down with that pity which is akin to contempt upon these mistaken persons? he did not. The intellect of both Lord and Lady Daventry was decidedly of an inferior order.

If Nigel for a moment felt tempted to hold their intellect and their conduct as beneath his notice, the temptation was resisted and vanquished at once; and his heart melted in gentlest compassion over them, as he prayed that the Spirit of God would lead them to Him who is the truth, and who alone giveth peace — peace and joy in believing. "You will listen to me, Lord Daventry," he said, "I am sure you will, before you turn from me. The Christian minister who seeks to obtain any influence by priestcraft, does, indeed, most wofully lose sight of the holy simplicity of his calling; but even more despicable is he of whom it may be said, he loveth the praise of men. It would, I see, be easy to please you, and to approve myself to you and Lady Daventry in one way, a way forbidden by God in his holy word. The minister of God has,

indeed, his directions plainly laid down for him. He is to approve himself, not to every man's humour, but to every man's conscience; he is to please men for their good, to edification.

"The language of our prayers in this service of the holy communion," he said, opening the prayer book, "is the humblest confession of sin. It is this; 'We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.' If you are about to use such language in the sacred service, even to God himself, surely your lordship must feel, as all the children of God have ever felt, that without the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, there can be no peace on earth.

"If our Lord Jesus Christ were to enter this chamber, not in his viewless presence, but in that mortal frame which he bore in his human ministry; —if he were to stand before you, and, showing you the wounds in his hands and his feet, and saying, 'Come unto me, all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' 'my peace I give unto you;' 'no man cometh unto the Father but by me;'—tell me, Lord Daventry, would you say I *am* at peace with God, even the Father; I have not

sinned against Him; I am not in need of any Mediator. If you are already at peace with God, you do not stand in need of any Mediator; if you do not come to Him, confessing, 'There is no health in me,' you need no physician. If you have not erred and strayed from the fold of Christ, you do not need that good Shepherd who hath given His life for the sheep. Why then receive the sacrament of the body and blood of our blessed Redeemer? There can be no meaning in the Holy Communion, unless by it we show the Lord's death till He come —His death the ransom of our lost souls. But surely you will not hold out against this wonderful love? surely you will seek eternal life in God's appointed way, though our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you seek communion with him in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? After saying this, I have delivered my own soul; I have set life and death before you;—you must decide for yourself. I can only add, that I am ready this instant, if you desire me, to administer to you the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; only beware, for it cannot act as a charm. Those who receive it in faith, receive Christ in the sacred elements. With them, and them alone, He enters into holy communion."

Lord Daventry had fixed his eyes with a dull, but intent stare, upon Nigel, during the whole time that he was speaking; and once or twice, when his wife had made an attempt to interfere, he had waved her away with his hand. "You have spoken the

truth, young man," he said in reply; "God bless you, and forgive ——" here his voice became strangely inarticulate, yet he continued to speak unintelligible words, till his whole countenance changed into a fearful distortion. Those who have witnessed the change of sudden paralysis, that paralysis from which the poor unconscious sufferer is only released by death — those, and those alone, can tell how affecting that change is—the mouth drawn on one side, the eyes rolling, the whole frame labouring with the unavailing struggle, even till the most beloved, and the most loving, feel the stillness and the certainty of death a blessed relief. At the end of four and twenty hours Lord Daventry expired.

CHAPTER X.

"Would'st thou the life of souls discern?
Nor human wisdom nor divine
Helps thee by aught beside to learn;
Love is life's only sign:
The spring of the regenerate heart,
The pulse, the glow of every part,
Is the true love of Christ our Lord."

KEEBLE'S CHRISTIAN YEAR.

"I ACCEPT with delight your invitation, my dear Nigel, to visit Dronfells, and to officiate on so joyful an occasion as your marriage to your lovely Miss Vernon; lovely she must be, according to the real meaning of the word. I have received, with the deepest interest, your account of her. I agree with you, she has been, doubtless, under the guidance of our Heavenly Teacher, or she would never have learnt to love His will and His ways, so simply, so meekly, and with so deep a sense of her own unworthiness. I knew you would be almost as pleased as myself, to hear of my being appointed domestic chaplain to our excellent bishop. It is, indeed, a high privilege to live in the society of

such a man The more I know of him the more I feel this. I should say of him, as Sir Henry Wotton said of Archbishop Whitgift, 'He is a man of the primitive temper; a man of such a temper, as when the church, by lowliness of spirit, did flourish in highest examples of virtue.' And he realizes, more than any one that I have ever known, the Apostle's description of the truly 'wise man, and endued with knowledge;' for 'he shows, out of a good conversation, his works with meekness and wisdom!' Whatever some parties may say, as to the uselessness of the office of a bishop, Hooker has said truly, 'A bishop, in whom there did plainly appear the marks and tokens of a fatherly affection towards them that are under his charge, what good might he do? ten thousand ways more than any man knows how to set down.' I think, Nigel, that we know something of bishops, now living, who are men of this stamp. You ask me to tell you something about the bishop and his domestic habits. I might reply by the description which Burnet gives of Bishop Bedell — do you remember it?

"'His habit was decent and grave; the furniture of his house not pompous nor superfluous, but necessary for common uses and proper. His table was well covered, according to the plenty that was in the country, but there was no luxury in it. Great resort was made to him, and he observed a true hospitality in house-keeping. He carried himself towards all people with such a gaining hu-

mility, that he won their hearts: he lived with his clergy as if they had been his brethen. At the same time, he avoided the affectations of humility as well as of pride — the former flowing often from the greater pride of the two; and amidst all those extraordinary talents with which God had blessed him, it never appeared that he overvalued himself, or despised others; that he assumed to himself a dictatorship, or was impatient of contradiction. It appeared he had a true and liberal notion of religion, and that he did not look upon it so much as a system of opinions, or a set of forms, as a divine discipline, that reforms the heart and life. In his family he prayed thrice a day, in a regular form, though he did not read it: this he did in the morning, and before dinner, and after supper. Every day, after dinner and supper, there was a chapter of the Bible read at his table, whosoever were present, and Bibles were laid before every one of the company, and before himself either the Hebrew or Greek, and he usually explained the difficulties that occurred.'—This is true, almost to a word, of our beloved and venerable friend. Nay, I may add of him, what was also said by Bishop Burnet of Archbishop Leighton. 'There is a visible tendency, in all he says, to raise his own mind, and those with whom he converses, to serious reflections;' and I may add, in the same borrowed words, 'I reckon my early knowledge of him, and my long and intimate conversation with him, among the

greatest blessings of my life! and for which I know I must give an account to God, in the great day, in the most particular manner.' I suppose you do not hear so much of what is going on in the world as we do. The Church of England is exposed to many a sharp attack. My hope is, that all this persecution will be met, on our part, by no expression of anger, or any bitterness of feeling. What the Church of England has long wanted, what would most effectually stop the going over of many of her thoughtless members to the ranks of the Dissenters, is consideration. We can have no objection to the most minute and searching inquiry into our establishment. The real system of the Church of England is but very imperfectly understood; it is by no means understood by many who are among the loudest in their outcry and their opposition against her.

"I have known the effect of a quiet and serious consideration of her real character, in more than one instance, end in the firm and decided settlement of an objector, who was wavering, simply because he was ill-informed — so many, indeed, confound the establishment with the members of it, and blame the former for the faults of the latter. A foolish child might break a crystal cup, because the water within it had been made muddy, or throw away a silver lamp, because the oil had become impure and unfit for burning; but surely a wise man would cleanse the cup, and see that it was

filled with water as transparently pure as the crystal, and replace the oil for that which is pure and will burn brightly.

"I do not mean to say by this that there are not some faults in her system; but are there not fewer in hers than in any other?—and who can say that she ever pretended to perfection, or that she ought to oppose herself to right, and real, and truly advisable reform? It is, in fact, the ill-doing of her members that has chiefly injured her, not the attacks of her opposers, and the confounding the character of the system with the character of the individual member of that system, which is like confounding the crystal of the vase with the less limpid clearness of the water within it.

"Suppose the great body of the early Christians had chosen to condemn the first appointment of the twelve Apostles by the Great Head of the Church, because Judas, being one of them, betrayed his Master; or that they had forsaken the holy Apostles because Ananias and Sapphira lied unto God; or because Demas basely forsook the church for the love of gain, and of the present evil world.

"If the system of our Church Establishment were divine perfection itself, still, so long as weak and fallible creatures were called to act in it, we should find sin and ungodliness appearing, and sometimes flourishing within her sacred pale.

" How truly I can sympathise with you in your observations as to the difficulty of weaning your beloved flock from the love of foolish and frivolous amusements and occupations! I would not, however, bring any violent accusations against your congregation, condemning them for this or that worldly practice. They will neither understand you, nor agree with you; but I would have you endeavour to point out to them the practical evidence of that declaration of Scripture, ' That to be carnally-minded is death; while to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.' It is not so much by condemning their sensual and worldly gratifications that you will prevail upon the world to forsake them, but you may speak to them of a better land in such terms of admiring delight, and with such graphic descriptions, that they may see you speak of that which you do know, and testify of that you have seen. Thus, when Moses came down from the presence of the Lord, who had passed by before him, and proclaimed himself merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, his countenance shined with the glorious brightness of the Heavenly Presence. But though I would condemn all harsh censures of the ungodly, and beseech you to instruct with meekness those that oppose themselves, yet you must not fail, when speaking of that better land of delight, to show them that the straight gate and the narrow path are the only entrance to it.

"Still, of this narrow way one may say, as the guide in the Pilgrim's Progress did of the Valley of Humiliation, 'Men have met with angels there, and found pearls there;' nay, the footsteps of our blessed Lord himself may be traced in that dry and desert way. And when on this subject, my dear Nigel, I may send you some lines of mine, and yet they are not altogether mine, for they are altered and abridged from a little poem of George Herbert's, called 'The Pearl.' I have marked what is not mine by inverted commas:

THE PEARL.

"I know the ways of honour; what maintains
"The quick returns of courtesy and wit;
"Yet I love Thee;
"I know the ways of pleasure; the sweet strains,
"The lullings and the relishings of it;
"Yet I love Thee."
I know them, and, alas! have loved them well;
So not with sealed, but with open eyes,
I come to Thee.
For who that hath the pearl can prize the shell;
Or value dross, when gold before him lies?—
Oh Lord, to Thee,
Despised as Thou art, I gladly come:
Thy strait gate and thy narrow path are mine:
They lead to Thee.
And this vain world seems wrapt in deadly gloom;
For thy sad cross, my glory! doth outshine
That world to me.

"And this is Dronfells—and Nigel's parsonage," said Felix; "and this is the oak parlour, of which he has so frequently spoken to me in his letters; and it opens, yes, I see it does, by this door, into his study. How easily I could have told, by the pictures and the books, that this is Nigel's residence! How well chosen are those engravings for the apartment of a Christian minister! and how like Nigel to have chosen them! The portraits of many humble and holy men, of glorious memory; and that beautiful cartoon of Raphael's, our blessed Lord giving his charge to Peter, 'Feed my sheep; feed my lambs;' the repentant apostle meekly kneeling, that noble group of the other apostles standing near, and the little flock of sheep quietly grazing at a short distance. Then again, that old Flemish print of the blind man leading the blind, and one after the other following into the ditch. But I surely hear voices throught his open window!—hark! that must be Dora's voice, so musical in every tone, and that is Nigel's voice. I am sure of it. Yes, they have entered the garden, by the gate in the wall at the farther end, and they are coming along the terrace walk towards the house. No, I am not disappointed at the first sight of Dora Vernon. She is not beautiful. I did not wish to find her so; but what a calm and innocent sweetness in her countenance! what modest eyes! what a peaceful open brow!—Ah! they know that I am arrived; they

are asking the gardener if he has seen me, and they are hastening forward to welcome me."

Nigel's character appeared to have undergone that change, without which the highest profession and the warmest zeal, whatever aspect they may wear in the eyes of their possessor, do not certainly exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. His godly sorrow had wrought in him that true repentance, that μετανοιεα, whereby we not only sorrow for sin, but forsake sin, that carefulness, that clearing of himself which are always in the heart of the true disciple. For he that hath this hope (the hope of the Christian) purifieth himself, even as God is pure. It might almost be said, that the last grace, and the fundamental grace, and the rarest grace of the Christian character, is humility. It might, we fear, be a charge too well supported against many high professors of religion of the present day, that they are not distinguished for being humble; they have zeal and knowledge, and many admirable qualities, but their distinguishing grace is not humility—Nigel was humble. It appeared also, that he had obeyed the Apostle's beautiful exhortation—"And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."—Not only might it be said of him that he had no proud looks, but that he made no unkind speeches. He was ready to put the best construction upon the doubtful conduct of another; his, indeed, was that love that "never faileth, that

believeth all things, endureth all things." The religion of some persons wears usually the frowning countenance of the inspired Apostle in Raphael's beautiful cartoon, when he passed his awful rebuke upon the false professor — "Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God." That of Nigel and his friend Felix, was rather like the figures of St. John and St. James, in the same picture, giving alms.

THE END.

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THE LABOURER AND HIS WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"Not cheerful! whose cheerfulness is to be mentioned with his? He ever liveth in the glorious presence of Him, who is the light of life. Which chamber in your house is the pleasantest? surely that, the aspect of which is towards the warm and cheering south. You shall often look in vain for violets and other sweetest flowers of the Spring along the hedge-rows to the north; but find the bank that basketh in the southern sunbeams, and presently you shall perceive the air to be scented with the pure breath of many fragrant blossoms, and the eye to be gladdened with their rich enameling. Nay, in every meadow you shall find that corner to be the most fertile which the sunshine first visiteth, and where it abideth longest. Here is a parable for you of a spiritual consideration which concerneth all the children of God. The

heart and the countenance of the Christian may be likened to the southern chamber, or the bank most fair with flowers, save that the sun in whose light the godly man rejoiceth, is the Sun of righteousness; and brighter is that heavenly Sun than ten thousand of the suns that gladden our earth; for He is to Heaven above, what the sun is to this our earthly world below. Yes, and far higher than the bodily senses and faculties which rejoice in the sunshine of our luminary, are the faculties of the renewed soul, which rejoice in the glory of the Sun of righteousness."

"I like these quaint old words that you have written in the fly page of this favourite old book of mine," said Mrs. Vaughan, turning to her husband; "tell me where I shall find the volume, or rather the field, to use the same figurative words, from which you have transplanted them." Mr. Vaughan looked up from the book in which he was reading, and smiled.—"Why that mysterious smile?" she said, "curling the lips, but no words from the lips. Yes, yes, you need not tell me, I understand. I see the writer of the quaint lines before me, you wrote them."—

"Well, and what are you thinking about?" said Mr. Vaughan, looking up again, "with that thoughtful look and abstracted air."—"Oh!" she replied, smiling brightly, "that I quite agree with you; but I was also thinking," she continued, "that there is one approaching, (and I felt sad and

grave at the sight of that beautiful child), one who seems all lightness and gaiety of heart, but who will be brought up, I fear, never to know that divine cheerfulness. My eyes were looking through that open window, at Bessy Carter; she was at the end of the avenue when I began to speak, but I suppose her errand has given speed to her little feet, for she is here; she sees me, and looks up to speak to me. She is not smiling to-day, but she is almost breathless with haste." Bessy had been told, that it would be a dreadful thing if her little brother died without a name, and she was come to beg Mr. Vaughan to come at once and baptize the baby.

Mr. Vaughan was soon at the cottage: a gentle-looking woman, a neighbour of Sally Carter's, was sitting on a low chair, soothing very tenderly the infant that lay on her knees; Sally Carter sat at some little distance, rocking herself backwards and forwards, and crying and moaning, and uttering, from time to time, some impatient word of complaint. The only notice she took of Mr. Vaughan's entrance was a fresh burst of crying. The baby was evidently very ill, its poor little limbs were fearfully wasted, its lips closed, and its eyes languidly and heavily staring. Mr. Vaughan did not ask what opinion the doctor had given of the infant; he saw that it was almost in a dying state, and he proceeded at once to administer the sacred ordinance.

"Fill that white basin with fair water, Sally, and set it on the table," he said; but Sally only made a sort of unwilling helpless movement to rise, and then dropped back in her chair, and went on as before, rocking herself backwards and forwards, and moaning. Old Margery Carter, however, though too deaf to hear what he had said, and though still very weak from recent illness, laid down her knitting, and assisted by her little grandchild Bessy, covered the little round table with a clean linen cloth, and placed the basin of clear water upon it, and then brought forth her own large book of Common Prayer, and laid it beside the basin. "Thank you, thank you, my good Margery," said the clergyman, courteously; "but pray don't trouble yourself to put that cushion for me to kneel upon; when I am as old as you, I may accept the offer of a cushion."

When Mr. Vaughan had baptized the infant, he turned to the poor mother, for whose grief he could not help feeling deeply.

"Your baby is very ill," he said, "but many have been nearer death, and yet recovered. Still I would have you ask, Sally, not that your own will, but that your Heavenly Father's will may be done. He is indeed a Father, loving and tender as any earthly parent, nay, far more so; and should it please Him to take the child, some purpose of love;"—he did not go on speaking, for all at once the hard and sullen expression of the mother's

countenance checked him.—"What have I said?" he exclaimed; "have I spoken unkindly or harshly? or does my speaking at all weary you?" She did not answer. "You do not, I hope, murmur against that wise and kind Father?" The woman did not look up, but her tone and manner were that of an injured and indignant person, as she said, "I don't know what I have done to deserve this."—"To deserve!" he exclaimed; "how you mistake the dealings of God with you! It is not according to our merits, but His mercies, that He deals with us, and this very affliction is sent in mercy, as a trial, not as a punishment; He will not love you the less even if He take your darling infant; and He calls upon you to say, whether in its life or death, 'Thy will be done:' try to say so, my poor friend, from your heart. Will you not say so?"—"Oh no!" cried the woman passionately, and violently; "I cannot say so,—no, no, don't ask me; I'll never consent to his death."

The minister looked very gravely on the hard countenance of the mother, and then on that of the little sickly baby, and sighing as he spoke, he said: "The child is not at all nearer death because we talk of dying, nor will you regret having sought to be prepared for the worst, when you see him before you in after years, strong and healthy. But if he should die, how wretched you will be to have shut your eyes so wilfully to the call of God. He calls upon you in this Bible to believe in His good-

ness and to obey His will. Your disobedience will not save the child, if God should please to take him from you. Do not hesitate then, but say, Thy will be done!"—"Why should I be teazed to say what I do not feel?" said the woman, bursting into a passion of tears; "I cannot wish the babe to die, nor will I say any thing of the sort. Oh! 'tis shocking! if it's God's will to take the child, He might as well cut me off too, for I cannot and will not give up my dear babe."

Mr. Vaughan sat down by the wretched woman, and in the gentlest, kindest way, endeavoured to soothe and comfort her; he saw that she would not bear to be reasoned with, but he felt it his solemn duty to set before her the wise and holy teaching of the word of God. He read to her, that 'affliction cometh not from the dust;' though 'man is born to trouble,' that 'God doth not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men;' but that 'whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth;' and then, after he had read that assurance from our blessed Saviour's own lips, 'He that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me;' he added that gracious invitation; 'Come unto Me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.' Sorrow, he said, was the fruit of sin, but our Lord who bore our sins and our sorrows in His own body on the cross, would have us lay down the whole burden of them at the foot of that cross." He read in vain, spoke in vain; at last, finding that she was

sullenly resolute not to say, 'God's will be done,' he took out a little book of tablets, and wrote on them:—when he had done writing, he said to Sally, "You may wish to know what I have been writing, I wish you to know. On the 2nd of August, 1720, I, Arthur Vaughan, rector of Peynscript, was sent for to baptize a sick infant, Richard Carter. I cannot forbear to leave it on record, that Sally Carter, the mother of the infant, positively refused to say, 'God's will be done.'"

As Mr. Vaughan quitted the house, the aged mother, who had observed, though she could not hear, all that had been done, turned towards her daughter-in-law, and begged for some explanation of what she had seen, asking particularly what had been written by the clergyman. Sally would not, or affected not to hear her, and looked very thoughtful and very sullen. "Come hither, Bessy," said the old woman to her grand-daughter, "and tell me what Mr. Vaughan wrote down in the book, for I am sure he wrote more than the babe's name and register; he looked displeased and heavy at heart, and something has happened to make him so."—"He did look very sad, grandmother," said the little girl; "and was very unhappy because mother would not take comfort, and told her that God did not wish to be unkind to her and to poor little baby, and he wrote down,"—here, however, the child coloured deeply, and held down her head, and seemed as if she did not like to speak, yet still the old woman continued to question her.

The child looked timidly at her mother, but was still silent; suddenly, however, Sally turned round, and in a coarse, rude voice, bawled into the ear of her deaf parent, "He wrote down that I would not say, I should think God right if he took that babe."—"And did you really tell him you would not say so?"—"To be sure I did," said the woman, "I was not going to give my consent to the babe's death."—"Your consent, Sally!" replied the old mother; "those are strange words! Ah! Sally, you have yet much to learn." Sally offered no reply, and the mild countenance of the aged woman was bathed in tears, as she entreated her daughter-in-law to pray that God would give her a softer heart: "a woman's heart, Sally," she added, "for a woman and a mother should feel as a child of God feels.—Give up this hard wilfulness, give up your own sinful way, and say that God's gracious will is best; let me send to beg that the good minister will blot out those words that he wrote down, because you would speak them; shall we send? shall I go? I would go myself sooner than let those words be kept against you;" and the aged woman rose up with some difficulty, for she was still unwell, and very weak. Here the neighbour in whose lap the baby was lying, rose up, and placing the child in its mother's arms. "I will go at once, if I may go. I would have offered to go before," she said, with a fixed and very calm look in Sally's face. "Do let me go, neighbour, send

me with all your heart. Am I to go?" Sally did not answer for some length of time; at last she said loudly and boldly—"No!"

Contrary to all expectation the infant recovered. Sally Carter now displayed a degree of levity as ill-timed as her sullen impiety. Instead of humble gratitude to the Father of mercies, she showed a sort of triumph about the baby's recovery, as if her knowledge and her wishes had restored the child.

Once, when carrying her child in her arms, she met Mr. Vaughan. "See who was right, sir," she cried with a loud bold voice, laughing as she spoke, and holding up the beautiful and smiling boy:—"he is not dead yet, I knew he would get well." Mr. Vaughan stopped, and looking gravely in her face, he replied, "I would willingly have said much more to you than I did when the child was to all appearance dying, but you were so overcome by natural grief, that I felt it would be cruel to reprove you, and now," he continued, affectionately caressing the boy, "I cannot do otherwise than rejoice at the recovery of your baby, yet I must reprove you, now that you are no longer wretched, not because you rejoice, but because you do not rejoice with trembling, because, indeed, your child is not restored to your prayers. I fear you did not pray in your affliction. I fear your sorrow had as little of God in it then, as your rejoicing has now. Remember, however, the words I now speak to you; the son who is not the child of

his mother's prayers, will seldom prove the child of God's blessings to that mother;—but perhaps I am mistaken," he added, while a blush of self-accusation for his seeming harshness, coloured his face, his voice and manner becoming very kind and softened, "perhaps I judge you too hardly, and after all, you do pray for your child." He had not judged her too hardly; he had not mistaken her character. The way in which she received his gentle reproof might have told him so. Whether purposely, or in utter carelessness, she had turned her attention wholly towards the child, and as he spoke, she held it out at arm's length, and drew it back, laughing and shaking her head, and thrusting her face into that of the merry child, who threw himself back, doubling his little hands, and chuckling and crowing with delight, and then she tossed the baby up in the air, and talked to him and laughed with him again and again, as if determined not to hear, or at least not to attend to the words of her minister. Mr. Vaughan would not go, and seeing that he was determined not to be tired out, she turned to him with a bold and slightly insolent manner, and stared him in the face.

"Well, Sally?" he cried.—"Well, sir?" she answered, in a tone half jest, half insolence. "I am waiting as patiently as I can," he continued, "and when you have done talking to your child, perhaps you will attend to me. Believe me I am your sincere friend; I wish to see you happy. I have

made it my prayer for you,—for you by name, every day since I was called to baptize your infant, that God will give you His grace and His blessing, that He will send His Holy Spirit to teach you and your child for Jesus Christ's sake." Sally replied only by an unmeaning simper. "I have a story to tell you before we part, Sally, and we will sit down at the foot of this old tree while you listen to me. It happened, I know not how many years ago (the story, however, is a fact), that a minister of the gospel found a poor woman in the same state of grief that I found you the other day, and from the same cause, the dangerous illness of her little infant; it happened also, that this person, though calling herself a Christian woman, and a Christian mother, showed the same spirit as you did. She would hear no reason, listen to no true comfort, she refused to bend her will to the will of God. After speaking to her for some time very kindly, and begging her to humble herself, but all to no purpose, the minister did what you saw me do, Sally; he wrote down, as I wrote. You are not attending to me even now," he said, interrupting himself, for he saw with real concern, the hardened state in which she still continued:—"attend to me at least for a minute or two, for you have not heard what followed: on that day, one-and-twenty years, that son, then the grown-up son of that mother, was hanged." Sally did not speak; she was grave enough now, but what she really thought

or felt was hidden under her bold hard countenance. "What do you say to this dreadful story?" said Mr. Vaughan; "this true story, dreadful as it is?"—"Why," she replied; "if it did really come to happen as you say, I suppose it was to be; and more shame to that hard-hearted parson, and to them that approves and follows such cruel dealing!" and Sally's eyes flashed with angry passion as she spoke. "We are not to suppose that the child grew up to be hanged," said Mr. Vaughan, "because his mother refused to give him up to God, and boldly set God's will at nought; nor because the clergyman set down in his pocket-book, the mother's refusal to give up her will to the will of God, but it is quite natural to suppose that such a mother would bring up her child neither in the fear of God, nor in obedience to man; that neither by her teaching, nor her example, would he learn to shun the way that leads to misery and disgrace. As for keeping up such a record or remembrance of that day, when your dear little boy was ill, Sally, and when you refused to say God's will be done, you shall see me rub out the words that I had written," and he then took out his tablets, and in her presence he rubbed out the words which he had written. "Remember, Sally," he said, as she turned away; "that if your innocent child grows up to scorn godly counsel, and to follow a bad example, and to become a wicked man, remember who will have to bear the chief blame;

you have not been without an awful warning, without the advice and the prayers of a true friend."

There are few sights more melancholy, than that of a little helpless innocent baby in the arms of a vicious mother. In spite of our sober and serious conviction that the Just Disposer of all events will open many blessed ways of knowledge and salvation to the child, and that He will demand an account, not of opportunities which have never been given, but of opportunities which have been altogether neglected; that He will make every allowance, and punish that child only for its own wilful rebellions; still we cannot help seeing the gentle infant (as we look forward) growing up in fearful familiarity with the household dangers of an ungodly family, and receiving his first impressions in vice, from the bad example of those whom it is so very natural for him to love, to reverence, and to imitate.

CHAPTER II.

'MOTHER, mother, do come and catch 'um for me—now, mother, do come!" cried a fine clumsy boy, pulling as he spoke at the arm and gown of a smartly-dressed untidy woman, who stood in the very abandonment of gossiping, with a smiling old crone, whose eyes were dilating, and her eyebrows exalting themselves, and her mouth contorting itself with a hundred grimaces, as she was (or seemed to be) interested, and amused and shocked, and astonished. "Well, dear! I'll come presently!—Wait a moment, love!—I'm coming directly, my darling!—Plague on the boy, I've no peace in my life for him! You little torment, I'll shake your bones out of your skin if you are not quiet." At last a succession of teazings and draggings, ably seconded by a loud yell, forced his mother to attend to him. "There, child," she said, "sit still, and amuse yourself, and don't worry any more, my pretty one. The child never will be quiet these summer evenings, without a

chafer to spin, and so he makes me catch them for him. Funny enough, a'nt it," said the brutal mother, pointing to the agonies of the insect. "Lauk, yes!" replied her old hag-like companion; "I always think them beetles must like it, or they never would spin round and round in such a desperate merry way;" and the two unfeeling wretches laughed, and Sally continued her tale of slander.

Why is such a circumstance mentioned? Had it any thing to do with the formation of the future character of James Carter? He was not naturally more cruel than other children; his barbarity on this, and many such an occasion, proceeded not so much from a delight in tormenting others, as from the mere selfish love of amusement. She, who should have checked and taught him better, never felt any uneasiness, or gave herself any trouble about him, unless he came in her way. He might be cruel, he might tell lies, he might lisp an oath in his childish rage, and if she was not out of humour at the time, and if he did not come and worry her, she cared nothing about it: if he did come across her in one of her ill-humours, he sometimes received a violent blow, unless he was quick enough to escape from her hand.

My reader, are you cruel to animals? I ask you a point-blank question. You must answer it to your conscience:—are you cruel? You are not,—then you are not offended at my question. You are—alas! you need not look far to find a proof

that you are a fallen creature, one deprived of the glorious birthright of the children of God. Cruelty is that proof; a fearful, damning proof. Man was made the lord, not the tyrant, over the inferior creatures of God's once blessed world; the kind guardian, not the merciless and brutal tormentor. The heart of the noblest, gentlest man, must often be affected by a sense of his degraded state, in the presence of any of the inferior animals. The timid flee from him—the savage turn from him—all distrust him. The gentle bond of confiding allegiance is broken. Shall we sever it still more widely? Consider not merely the ungodliness, but the unmanliness of cruelty. The mean-spirited are cruel. Cruelty is the very mark and earnest of cowardice. It is only the viler brute animals that are cruel. The lion is not cruel, nor the mastiff cruel.

"Mother, there is bad news for you, and all of us! Why, where is mother?" said Anthony Carter, staring about him as he entered his cottage.—"Your mother," replied Sally, "is just gone up stairs to clean herself a bit and put on her best ribands, for Mrs. Martin at the Hall has sent us word she will take her tea with us. I thought I would make a pikelet or two for the old ladies." Anthony saw that his wife was in an unusually good humour, and he half regretted having said a

word, just then, about the bad news. He hoped that Sally would let his words pass unnoticed. She did not. It seemed that as she turned again to her pikelet-pan, her recollection about the bad news came back. "What's the bad news, eh, Tony?" she said sharply, but without turning her head; and then, finding that he made no answer, she raised her voice to a higher pitch. "What's all this about bad news? Speak, man, and don't keep me all in a quandary."—"Why, why," said Tony, scratching the side of his head with his knuckles, "Cousin Snow, up in London, has broke all to pieces—made a terrible smash—gone to the dogs."—"And what's that to we?" cried the wife, turning round at once, and facing him.—"What's that to we!" he repeated; "why, it is only this, that all mother's money was in his hands, and it is all gone."—Sally lifted up her hands and eyes, and let the pikelet lie unheeded in the pan till it was burnt black. She sat down, with her arms crossed under her apron, and a blank look upon her face. They were both silent, till she said, in a voice which sounded frightfully harsh in her husband's ears, "What's to be done with your mother if this is the case? Who is to keep her, I should like to know? Not we, I'm certain. Oh no!" she continued, not listening to the faint remonstrance which her husband was beginning to make; "I never bargained for such a turn up of affairs as this."—"'Twas you that pressed me to get her

here," said Tony doggedly, and you used to go and coax her yourself, till you got her to give up her own home and come and live with us." — It was bad policy in Tony thus to remind his hard-hearted wife of her own conduct, since she was fully determined to disown it, and when he knew that she would never let him take the upper hand over her. — "I've tried the experiment of having the old woman here," she said, in a cold, bitter tone, which cut the son to the heart; "and I'm quite sick of it. It was just like her folly to go and lend out that money to your cousin Snow. I would have had you make her take it out of his hands long enough ago, I'm sure, but I dare say you never said a word to her about it." — "Why, Sally," he replied, "you told me yourself that you were quite satisfied when I got mother to make her will, and leave all to our Jim; and when Mr. Snow agreed, at mother's desire, to pay the interest of the money into my hands, and such high interest! you said nothing could be better."—Sally was now getting very angry, and was beginning to break forth in one of her whirlwinds of rage against her husband, when a gentle tap was heard at the door, and Mrs. Martin, from the Hall, made her appearance. Almost at the same moment old Margery Carter came down stairs, dressed in her best chintz gown, and her muslin apron, and her black mittens. She had quite recovered her illness, and looked unusually well, and she smiled upon every one as she en-

tered. Mrs. Martin brought a little bottle of cream and a few light cakes for their tea; and as her visit was felt by Sally to be a great honour, she satisfied herself with giving one sharp frown to her husband, and then, with her sweetest smiles and smoothest tones, she welcomed Mrs. Martin, and thanked her for the cream and tea-cakes, and pulled down the long sleeves of her tawdry gown, which had been pushed up while she attended to the pikelets.—"You will find a pat or two of butter under the napkin, Sally," said Mrs. Martin, as Sally took out the tea-cakes. Miss Mabel would make me bring some little niceties, and quite at the bottom of the basket is a little book which my dear young lady sends to Margery; to you Margery," she said, raising her voice, and pointing to the book which Sally handed with a gracious smile to her mother-in-law. — "Fine reading, I make no doubt," said Margery, putting on her spectacles. "Kind indeed of Miss Poynscourt, dear lady! Why, I never should have been able to read a black letter if she had not taken a deal of pains with me. I made a poor hand of it till she took to teaching me, and yet I was always a better scholar than most girls in my younger days, being that my mother kept the school on the Green."—"Beautiful butter, I declare!" exclaimed Margery, turning from her book to the pats of butter, and lifting up the fresh strawberry leaves that covered them; "and what a handsome new print of a cow, such

as I always wanted when I was at the dairy-house." —" Ah yes, I remember we could not get one for you," said Mrs. Martin, " though Miss Mabel tried at Shrewsbury and at Chester. Jane Howel is good dairy-woman enough — the best we have had since you left us — but I fear she will find the place too heavy. Though she is not half your age, Margery, I think you are almost as stout as she is." —" Poor thing! I'm sorry for her," replied Margery; " they told the Missis (didn't they, Sally?) down at the shop, that Jenny Howell seemed to be in a poor declining way. Ruth's a dear child."— " What! my little Ruth!" said Mrs. Martin; " indeed she is, and though a mere child of ten years old, she is a surprising help to her mother. I do love that child."

It has been truly said,* that from the " duchess down to the lowest artizan, there is not an instance of the family being blessed, and prosperous, and happy, where, yielding to the temptation of her lot, the wife has usurped dominion over her lawful lord." The rule is, or ought to be, in a Christian community, according to the word of God, " The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is of the church; and as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wife be to her husband in every thing, and let the wife see that she reverence her husband." The wife knows not her own true

* See " Social Duties on Christian Principles."

interest who attempts to violate this sacred commandment.

After some high words and angry disputings with his wife, in which, as usual, he gave way, and let her have her sinful will, because he had neither moral courage nor firmness to withstand her, Anthony consented to turn his aged mother out of doors. Such was the plain English of the determination to which they came, though Tony, and even his hard-hearted wife, would not have agreed that they would positively call it turning Margery out of doors. Sally was not positively determined to take the pious, gentle old woman by the shoulders and thrust her from the door, but the thing was to be managed with a show of something like kindness. Sally prepared her false smiles, and her lying excuses; and Tony made up his mind to brave the gnawings of his conscience. Any thing for peace, he said to himself; fool that he was, like many a man before him, he consented to give up peace of mind, peace in his conscience, for peace in his house.

Margery Carter was old and infirm, and very deaf, but old age had not robbed her of strong common sense, and of high principle, nor blunted the keenness of her feelings. She had begun to find out, since her abode had been in her son's house, the true character of his wife; nay, she had learnt, for the first time, that Anthony himself was very weak and irresolute. He could storm, and

swear, and say bitter and brutal things, which was certainly no proof of his manliness; but he had not the hardy determination and perseverance of will and nerve possessed by his wife; and though Sally quailed a little in her first dispute with him, she soon learned to laugh at him and at his most violent threats, and taught him to understand that she would never submit to be mastered by him.

One afternoon when Anthony had obtained leave from his master to stay at home, to work in his own garden, his mother called him into the house. His wife was already there. Margery shut the door, and turning to them both, with a voice and a look so quietly decided that they were astonished, she said, "I have been making myself very unhappy for the last week or two, in trying to find out the reason of the change which has come upon you both in your ways to me of late. I see nothing but a glum look in Sally's face, and get always a short and snappish answer from her; and you, Anthony, look almost as dull, and never say a word even at your meals, when I am present. Now, there's something under all this, I am certain; and all I have to say is this, that if I have given offence, I have not meant to do so, and I am heartily sorry, and beg both your pardons."—The tears rose into her son's eyes when he heard his mother speak thus; and even Sally looked disconcerted, and could not recover her composure for some few minutes. At last, however, Sally in a smooth and

roundabout way let the old woman know, "that though for the next quarter they should be sorry to part with her, yet that at the end of that time she was afraid her room would be wanted; indeed, that Anthony had written to promise the room to a person who was to pay a handsome sum for the use of it."—"Indeed they were so poor," Anthony now grumbled out, "and times were so bad, that they could not afford to go on as they had done; and as Mrs. Giles had a little property of her own, and wished to give her daughter Sally the benefit of it, and had offered to pay handsome for bed and board, he had thought it his duty to promise her their spare room when she could come to it."—"Her poor mother," Sally added, in a reproachful tone, "was getting into years, and she had been a slave over the wash-tub (she was a washerwoman) till she had well nigh slaved herself to death. It would be a happy day for her when she could sell her mangle, and her row of tubs, and get away from Manchester, and come and live with her own child at Poynscourt. Mrs. Giles loved the country."—Margery heard them both out, and, deeply as she felt, she pitied both the husband and the wife at the bottom of her heart, for their cold and cruel meanness, but she could not all at once get over the shock which she had received. She turned deadly pale, and trembled from head to foot as she sat in her chair, and looked calmly and even kindly at her son and his wife. "You have done what

pleased you," she said mildly; "I have long felt myself a poor useless creature, and I must be ready to go a day or two before my room is wanted. I do not fear, no, I do not fear, that the Lord will forsake me." A few tears stole down her thin cheeks as she spoke, but she did not utter a complaint, or say one unkind word. She might have reminded them that it was not altogether to please herself that she had sold her few things, and given up her own little dwelling, and come to live with them; and that she had been over-persuaded by Sally to do so; but she was not one given to reproaches, and so she kept her grief to herself till she could get away to her quiet little chamber, and there commune with her own heart and her God. She rose up as soon as she felt she could do so without trembling, and she quietly walked to her chamber, and shut herself in with her Bible. When she came down to join the family again, her face was as calm, and her manner as mildly cheerful as ever.

CHAPTER III.

"WELL, Sally, and what may thy business be at the parish pay-table," said one of the farmers; "thy husband has always a good strike of work, and thou hast but two children. What in the world can bring thee here?" Sally was not at all abashed by this address; she answered with a pertness of tone and manner which alone were enough to prejudice her hearers against her. "It is not to be expected that my husband and I can keep mother for nothing, and if you wont make her an allowance, all that I can say is, she must be taken into the poor-house."—"Hallo, misses," said old farmer Brown, a man of the old school, a rough, but truly kind-hearted Englishman: "Hallo! hallo! what nonsense are you talking? Not to be expected!—is it not? that a son should support his own mother, his poor old mother! things are come to a sad pass,—why Sally, I should be ashamed to let such words come out of my lips."—"Well, all I can say is," replied Sally, "that if

you can't and wont help the old woman, I shall go to the magistrates' meeting next Monday, and see what they have to say to it. We have never troubled a parish yet, and 'tis hard enough when the poor old thing has lost all her little savings, that you wont help her."—"We never refuse to help any one," said farmer Brown; "when they are brought to want, and have none to do for them; but Margery and her good man, when they were young, would as soon have thought of flying as of begging for their old father and mother at the parish pay-table; you have only one parent upon your hands, and can't you keep her off the parish. I am sure it don't cost much to feed her."—"Yes, but it does," said Sally; "she feeds very heartily, and what's more, we have the law on our side."—"*Only* if you are too poor to support your mother, Sally," said Mr. Vaughan, who came in while Sally was speaking about the law: "and you can say, and speak the truth, that you really cannot afford to keep your old mother?" he continued.—"To be sure I can," cried Sally boldly, repeating his words; "I can say, and speak the truth, that we cannot afford to keep old Margery; and what's more, gentlemen, I won't have her at my house, since you dare me to it, pay or no pay; you mun look to her yourselves, and lodge her yourselves, for go she shall. So you may take her to the workhouse as soon as you please."

In due time, Mrs. Giles came from Manchester,

and managed to make her grandson, James, or Jimmy as she called him, sick the same evening, with the cakes she brought in her pockets; they were made with rancid butter, and warm with the heated atmosphere of her pocket, but the boy found no fault with them; and even Sally, who was that evening in high spirits, was induced to take a large bite of one of them. Jimmy, however, was very cross when he began to feel the effect of the greasy cakes, and he began to cry, and to say, that he "wanted to see his grandmother; not you," he added, taking his thumb out of his mouth, and giving Mrs. Giles a blow, as she endeavoured to take him on her knee, for though he was ten years of age, and felt himself too old to be taken on her knee, he had kept up his babyish custom of sucking his thumb, in his seasons of sorrow. Sally gave him immediately, what she called a sound spank, and pushing him up the stairs, shut the door at the bottom of them in his angry, crying face, and told him to go to bed at once or she would leather him. More than an hour afterwards, on going up stairs to take her mother's boxes, she saw that James had not been in bed that evening, and that as the window was open, and one of the tiles broken on the slanting roof below it, she guessed, and guessed rightly, that he had made his escape from that window. She also guessed, and guessed rightly, that he was gone to the poor-house to see old Margery; she went after him at once, and after

loading Margery with her coarse abuse for enticing the boy, she brought him back, roaring and fighting with her as she dragged him along the village street.

It was on the same evening that Mrs. Martin, with a face brimful of indignation, came to tell Miss Poynscourt, that old Margery had been sent to the poor-house. Miss Poynscourt had been at the poor-house that morning, and she was then telling her father in what a state of quiet grief she had found poor Margery, her usually pale face, Mabel said, was flushed, for she could not help feeling the disgrace of being being obliged to enter a workhouse, and her manner was a little flurried. "Things were all so new and strange to her," she said, "but she had tried not to forget that she was still as entirely under His care, 'Who maketh all things to work together for good to them that love Him,' as ever she had been. She should have been pleased, had it been in her son's power to maintain her, without letting her come upon the parish during the few more years of her mortal course; but as that could not be, she was very thankful for food, and clothing, and a shelter in the parish poor-house. She was almost past work, but she would do her best at her knitting, to earn what she could towards her living.

Margery had been scarcely a month in the workhouse, when Jane Howell, the dairy woman at the Hall died, and at the request of Mr. Poynscourt,

Margery went to take up her abode with Richard Howell, to keep house for him, and to take the charge of his little daughter, Ruth. Every body respected Margery, and Richard found, that old and infirm as she was, she made, with Ruth's assistance, an excellent housekeeper.

There is no one on whom the future character and conduct of the man depend so entirely, as the mother to that man when he is a child. She has a thousand ways of approach to his heart, which are neither known nor unclosed to any one but herself. Wo be unto that mother who neglects to use the influence God has given her with her child, for good. The wise man has said, "a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame." James Carter was thus left to himself, for he was not brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He was left to himself, to his own deceived heart. Early accustomed to hear his mother and his father quarrel about the merest trifles, when one or both were out of humour, he learnt sometimes to condemn and dislike the one, and sometimes the other. Their oaths and their profane jesting were not intended for his ears, but neither Anthony nor Sally felt it worth their while to wait for his absence, and the boy very naturally learnt to swear from the lips of his parents.

Anthony generally went to church, but Sally herself had never been brought up to attend a place of worship. She had no liking for the excellent minister of the parish; she never showed any thing like reverence towards him. How should she? She had never followed his voice in prayer or praise, never heard him preach but once, and that was on the day her son was christened.

You may tell a child a hundred times not to do something that is bad, but if he finds it naturally pleasant to himself to disobey you, he will yield to a power which has a more forceful influence with him than your commands, and so you may have no effect on him by your words; but let one bad action which you do before him be naturally agreeable to him, your one action will have more influence with him than your wisest words of advice, though spoken more than a hundred times. Sally promised Mr. Vaughan and Miss Poynscourt to send her boy to school, and she sent him, and always said to him, as he turned from the door on his way to school, "Well, James, be a good boy!" and he sometimes answered, "Yes, mother;" but she never got anything more from him. As for being a good boy, he insensibly associated the words with the unmeaning weariness of his mother's weary voice when the stale advice was given; and as she contented herself with saying, "Be a good boy!" and then gave herself no further trouble during the morning to make him so, he contented himself with

saying "Yes, mother," and taking no further trouble to be so; and off he generally went, not to school, but to play truant, sometimes in the stable-yard of the Red Cow, always taking care to keep out of sight of the tap-room window, which looked into one part of the yard; for once or twice he had seen his father seated among the drinkers there. Since Anthony's conscience had troubled him about his poor old mother he had taken to drinking, a very common custom, alas! with those who will not rouse themselves to do the thing that is right, and yet cannot bear the checks of a troubled conscience.

Mr. Vaughan turned away,—he had been talking to no purpose to Sally Carter about her son and about herself. "What does he come canting here for?" she said, plunging her arms into a sea of soap-suds in the tub before her; "I 'm wholly sick of his nonsense, with his 'Let me beg, Sally, that you will come to church, and, let me hope, my friend, that James will not be allowed to run away from school;'" and as she spoke, she mimicked and mocked the voice and manner of Mr. Vaughan, and followed up her mocking with a contemptuous sneer. For a minute or two she continued plumping and plunging her arms into the suds, and rubbing and scrubbing with all her might a flimsy cap of spotted muslin, which she at last severed in two. "Plague take the rag!" she said; "'tis all that parson's fault. A pretty dab I 've made of it. Look

here, Molly," she cried, as her friend, Molly Pratt, came up to the door: "it's all to pieces — good for nothing — you may have it. I am all in a fluster still. The parson has been jawing here; and you'll catch it too, old *gal*, one of these days. I'd have him to know, however, that I'll not darken the doors of his church till I'm carried there. Dear, dear! do sit down, Molly, and tell us a bit of news:" and Sally stood up, wiping the fringe of soapsuds round and round her large fat arms with her fingers. "Why, what have you got under your shawl, Molly? Yes, I see—a bottle of comfort for the old lady. I knew she must be expecting you; for she has been talking for the last hour about her pains and spasmodics, and I always know what that means. Come, come, give us a drop—just a thimblefull, to wet one's lips;" and saying so, she did more than wet her lips, raising the bottle to her mouth. "There, Molly, mother will never be the wiser. I dare say she is in the garden, walking up and down the path, and feeling the pea-pods to find out if there are enough peas for a dish; for she vows and declares that she will have a couple of ducks and green peas in a day or two."

Mrs. Giles came in, with a smile on her face and an open pea-pod in her hand. "Look, Sally, dear," she said, "the rain has swelled them finely. Order the ducks as soon as you will, and come to me for the money; and here am I, ready to shell a dish of peas; the sooner the better. 'Hey! Molly,'

she cried, changing her voice into somewhat of a doleful whine, "you have brought it, have you? Well, here's the money, and a penny for yourself for bringing it. You may give me a glass now, Sally, for I've been suffering all the morning with my little, *infernal* complaint. I feel it does me good," she added, having tossed down the contents of the glass, and smacking her lips as she put the glass upon the table.

Mr. Vaughan met with James as he passed through the churchyard; the boy was sitting on a tombstone, listening to some account which Charley Hack, the hostler of the Red Cow, was reading from a very dirty newspaper. The hostler and his companion were both so thoroughly taken up with the account of a cock-fight, that Mr. Vaughan had also heard many of the cruel details of the unmanly sport before his presence was perceived. "Put it in your pocket, Charley—make haste—here's the parson," whispered James; but before he could do so the parson had begged to see the paper, and had received it from the hostler's hand. The hostler walked away, and Mr. Vaughan turned to James, and said, "I have no right to the paper, if it belongs to you, my dear boy; but tell me, where did you meet with it?"—"Oh, it belongs to my grandmother from Manchester," said James; "her as lives with us now; and she has a sight more of them, and Charley loves to read them.

Her cousin Smart sends her one every week."—"SUNDAY! indeed," said Mr. Vaughan to himself, passing his eye over the paper; "and this is the food for the mind of a Christian Englishman on the Lord's Day! as if they could choose no other day for such a publication. Where is the manliness of the English character, if such mawkish stuff as this can be tolerated? 'The new cockpit—many capital mains to be fought—we hail with delight the revival of this good old English sport!'—'The Ring—fight between Sam Scroggs and the Lincoln Butcher—19th round, Sam evidently had as much punishment as he could take; fight ought to have closed, but Sam's friends would have another shy—20th and last round, Sam got another pop in the mug, and floored again; his fall a heavy one. It was all over, poor Sam could not rise—Butcher proclaimed the winner—surgical assistance too late, poor Sam was quite gone! Coroner's inquest to sit this evening.' And this is the garbage," said Mr. Vaughan, "on which Englishmen, and professed disciples of the Saviour of mankind, can consent to feed on the Day of Holy Rest! Such wretched and *profane* trash!" he added, as his eye fell upon another corner of the paper. "I should like to see you burn this paper, James, and I should like to prevail with you never to let Charles Hack read another of them to you. Will you promise me not to listen to the reading of another?"

He knew that the boy, clever and knowing as he

was when books were out of the question, was too much of a dunce to get on with the paper by himself. He talked in vain, however, to James; the boy had not been taught by the example of his parents to respect his minister, and after laughing and replying in an insolent tone of voice for some time, he became suddenly sulky, and flatly refused to give up the paper.

CHAPTER IV.

When James Carter was about eighteen years of age a great change took place in his family; his father died of a dropsy brought on by drinking, and Mrs. Giles, his grandmother, fell from the top of the coach on her way from Manchester to Poynscourt. She had been staying with her cousin Smart at Manchester, and though her fall happened at an early hour of the day, she had been too intoxicated to keep her seat. Her favourite bottle had been raised to her mouth, and as she fell with her face on it, her features were dreadfully cut and disfigured, and part of the bottle had pierced almost to her brain. Sally was at last deeply affected; for the lifeless body of her mother was brought along the village street just when she and her son, and the rest of the mourners, were returning from poor Anthony's burial. Mrs. Giles was to have returned from Manchester for the funeral, and they had waited for her that morning more than an hour. By Sally's own earnest request, Mr. Vaughan was

sent for immediately; and she seized his hand when he came, and begged him to pray for her and to comfort her. James Carter also, in his deep mourning, with his fine face pale as the dead, turned to him with such an expressive look of affection and gratitude, that Mr. Vaughan could not keep back the tears which he felt rushing to his eyes. They were tears of joy, for he thought he might now look with some real hope for a change in the mother and her son. Sally had appeared a little softened towards him during the last week of her husband's illness, when Mr. Vaughan had attended him daily, but James had always left the house as soon as the clergyman entered, and on the evening of his father's death it was well known that James was at a fair in the neighbourhood.

From that day a reform seemed to begin in the conduct and habits of the widow and her son. They appeared together at church on the following Sunday, and James soon after appeared to have become so steady, that he got two or three jobs of work to do in the park under Poynscourt's bailiff; nay, he continued to conduct himself so well, that he was made a regular labourer on the estate.

At the end of the second year after her husband's death, Sally Carter married again. She had always been a very fine-looking woman, and an excellent, hard-working manager; but her mode of living was altogether so different from what it had formerly been, that, although the neighbours

thought Richard Howell might have done well enough with his tidy daughter Ruth to keep his house, no one wondered that he had chosen Sally Carter. To be sure, they said, Ruth might get married herself before many years had passed over her head, and Sally had inherited some property at her mother's death, and she had made her house, with her son's help, a very comfortable dwelling. Every body thought, however, that James would not have approved of his mother's second marriage, but he was highly pleased with it, and he knew Richard Howell right well, having worked for nearly two years in the same place with him. Before, however, the marriage took place, James hired a room in an adjoining cottage for his grandmother, Margery Carter, and Ruth went with her father to the house of his new wife. She had heard of a place in farmer Brown's family, and agreed to hire herself to him when the dairy woman, then about to be married, should move with her husband to a small farm.

The reason why James approved of his mother's marriage to Richard Howell was soon plain enough. In his visits to old Margery he had seen enough of Ruth to find out that the man who might become her husband would have one of the best wives in the place. James had two sisters, Bessy, of whom some mention was made at the beginning of this little volume, and Margaret, a child of seven years of age when her father died. Bessy had never

been a favourite with her ill-judging and violent-tempered mother, especially after the birth of her brother James. Mrs. Vaughan had found less difficulty than she expected in getting her to school, and keeping her a regular attendant there. From school she had gone to service at an early age, and she had grown up a modest and well-conducted young woman. Margaret was a sickly girl, for she was the child of a drunken father, and she had been indulged by her mother, but she was so gentle and sweet-tempered that she had been less spoiled than most other children in the same situation would have been. This child was a great favourite with her brother, who had sense enough to perceive that she would never be attentive to the duties of her station if still left to herself, as she had always been by her mother. He saw, therefore, with gratitude, the kindness of Ruth towards his little sister, and the pains she took to teach her to sew and to read, and to do the work of the house; and her gentle ways with Margaret were so winning, that the child never seemed so happy as when in her company.

"How glad I was when you came to live with us, Ruth," said James; "you have made home like another place to me. I used to spend my evenings at the public-house, but now I like to come home of an evening, and sit with you and little Margaret. I don't know how it is," he continued, drawing nearer to her, and taking the end of the

sampler she was at work upon in his hand, "I don't know how it is,"—and then he looked full in her face, with such a mild expression in his eyes, that Ruth confessed to herself that James could be gentle and pleasing,—"you always understand me, and seem to make allowances for my temper, and if I speak like a brute to you, you hardly ever answer me; or if you do answer me, it is not, as mother does, in a passion, giving me, as the saying is, as good as I gave. Is this your work Ruth?" he said, examining the sampler. "No, James; it is your little sister Margaret's, and she is working at it every day to please her mother, and we take it every day to show it to your grandmother." "And did you teach little Margaret to work as well as this is wrought, and to mark out all those verses? they are very grand verses, and as sweet as ever I read:—

> "Jesus, permit Thy gracious name to stand
> As the first effort of an infant's hand,
> And while her fingers o'er this canvas move,
> Engage her tender heart to seek Thy love.
> With Thy dear children may she share a part,
> And with Thyself, Thy name upon her heart."

And then James looked with admiration upon the flower-pots and the triangular shaped trees, and the pigeon-houses, and many other figures which were in progress of limning by needle, and by divers coloured silks upon the canvas.

"Those verses," said Ruth, calling his attention

again to the poetry, "were on my sampler, and your grandmother liked them so much, that I thought it would please her to see them wrought by Margaret's hand." "I know what," said James, "I wish you would take as much trouble to improve me, Ruth, as you do with my little sister. I wish I thought that one really good person like you cared for me, and loved me." "How you talk without thinking, James!" she replied. "Don't Mr. and Mrs. Vaughan up at the Rectory care for you, and don't your grandmother and your"—"Yes, yes," said he, interrupting her, somewhat impatiently, "I know they do, and I know they are good; but what I meant to say was, that no one who knows how to deal with me, cares for me. You are the only person, Ruth, that can turn me; and what do you care about me?" "I do care about you, James," she replied gravely and modestly, "and I told you only last Sunday, when you asked me to be your wife, that I would never marry a man who led the life which you had been leading till a short time ago. A man who would sit drinking in public houses, and who would go off to fairs and cockfights, and who was never to be seen in the house of God." "But I have been leaving off my bad ways for the last year and more," said James, "and what's more, I have been doing so to please you, for I knew that you would never have me, if I went on in those bad ways. I will try, more than I have yet tried, to

please you." "Not to please me, James, but to please God. Please him, obey him, and let his favour be your first object." "I will," said he, "I will do my best to follow your good advice, and if I seek the favour of God in the first place, I will seek your's in the second." "O James," she answered, "it is well that I have not promised to be your wife,—how soon, I fear, would your wife be disappointed, if you only gave up your evil courses for her sake, what would follow? why, that as soon as you grew tired of her, you would return to them. What should hinder your doing so? The strongest power that held you might be easily weakened." "Well, Ruth," he said, and sighed, "I wish to do what is right, and if you cast me off, and will give me no encouragement to do so, who is there to help me? Won't you lend me a helping hand, now that we meet as kinsfolks under the same roof? Your father is now my father; for his sake think upon me! my mother is now your mother, and I am that mother's son." "If you really love me, James," replied Ruth, "you will pray to the Lord that he will give you grace to love him, and if you love him you will delight to do his will, and to walk in his ways."

Ruth went to take her place in farmer Brown's household the next day. She had hired herself for a year. James had vainly hoped to prevail upon her to marry him instead of going to service. She said to him, however, that if he stood the proof of

that year she would consent to be his wife, if, as she added, he were then still in the same mind to have her. At the end of the year James was in the same mind, and he had continued steady. He claimed the performance of the promise made by Ruth, and they were married. Ruth had a few misgivings, but she felt it ungenerous to listen to them. "What proof," she asked herself, "could I expect of his change, but the proof of good deeds, and has he not given me this proof?"

Mrs. Vaughan turned to her husband, as they were walking home from church, a few Sundays after the marriage of James and Ruth. "It was a pleasant sight, was it not," she said, "to see James Carter and his wife so constant in their attendance, morning and evening, at church? My friend Bessy also generally manages to be with them. How happily I have found my fears vanish away in the case of that young woman? She looks as cheerful, too, as she did when a girl."—"I only hope we may not be deceived in her brother," said Mr. Vaughan. "Why should we for a moment doubt his sincerity?" replied the lady. "I am sure I have no wish to doubt his sincerity! but for an illustration of what I would say, tell me what this is?" he said, touching with the end of his umbrella the low fence which divided the rectory-garden from the churchyard: "Do you want an exact description, Arthur?" she replied, and smiled. "Yes, yes, as exact as you please."—"Well then, this is

a railing of wood, somewhat decayed and worm-eaten, and therefore unsound, which by the advice of a certain clergyman's wife, was not taken down, and used for firing, according to the wish of her husband, but the fence was thought by her strong enough to last for several years, and therefore, (after the holes and other marks of its unsoundness had been stopped up with putty, it was covered with several coats of paint."—"And thought," continued Mr. Vaughan, "to look quite as well as this? Well, dear Lucy, go on."—"This fence," continued Mrs. Vaughan,—"dear Arthur! how odd you are!—this fence of new sound wood, on which the paint is not quite so fresh and bright; for it was put up, and painted two years ago."—"To make the fence really a sound one," said Mr. Vaughan, gravely, "it is necessary to renew which, Lucy? the paint or the wood?"—"The wood, of course," she replied; "but the paint will serve for a year or two."—"I know it will, Lucy, and my fears, in the case of James Carter, are, that the change has taken place not in the wood, but in the paint, not in the man's self but in his *seeming*. He may think himself changed; but we are not changed, because we think ourselves so; we must go to God himself, to no power short of the power of His grace, to become new creatures. Most heartily do I trust and pray that James Carter may be a new creature. I am quite sure that mere outward reformations will never stand.

CHAPTER V.

Few of my readers may have visited the secluded valley and village of Poynscourt. It is several miles from any high coach-road, though I have occasionally strained my eyes from the top of the stage-coach on the road between Whitchurch and Chester, and fancied I could distinguish a dark, deep cleft in the mountains towards the west, with a clump or two of fir trees, contrasting their blackness with the aerial purple of the mountain side, and thus marking the spot. The valley is remarkably wild and beautiful, a narrow road and a clear but rapid river fill up the entrance, the rocks rising abruptly as a wall on either side, and groves of fir-trees crowning the rocks. The valley widens as you advance, and the river winds along through green pastures, and pleasant orchards. Here and there a cottage, or an old, black-timbered farm-house may be partly seen among the hanging woods which clothe the sides of mountains, and upon the banks of the river, about a mile from the

entrance of the valley just beyond the few clustered houses of the village, and the church and the parsonage, begins the park of Poynscourt, rich in venerable trees. From the gates an old avenue of beeches leads to the hall, at least to the side entrance, and the ground slopes gently upward all the way.

The old mansion stands sideways, not looking down the valley, but right across; in the front is a broad square terrace or platform, sixty or seventy feet above the river. Almost at this point the river takes a turn, and rushes in winding rapids along over masses of rock, and through woods of dark pines, the banks in some places rising into precipices, in others showing green and open glades of the park, where the ground is thick set with fern, and where troops of deer are often browsing quietly. The house itself is a strange contrast to the bold and picturesque foreground of rocks and waters; it is a low spreading mansion of red brick, with wide sash windows: and behind the house the gardens rise in terraces, of ornamental stone-work, to the very summit of the hill, where there stands a summer-house much frequented by the family from the mansion below, there being always on that spot (if any where) a fresh and pleasant breeze.

Miss Poynscourt stood on the highest terrace; she had laid down her book in the summer-house, and her father was pointing out to her a cottage

upon the wide dark heath, lying without the valley, in the open country. The garden and the few green fields about the cottage, and the hazel coppice on the sloping hill behind it, made a bright spot in the desert of dark brown heath: a little streamlet might be traced, like a thread of silver, from the hazel coppice, across the heath; and a wreath of pale blue smoke was slowly winding up from the chimneys of the cottage, and clinging to the foliage of the coppice behind it.

"That is Ruth's cottage, Mabel," said Mr. Poynscourt; "she and her husband have had the courage to go and live there; they are the first persons who resided there for more than twenty years. Ever since the murder of the Scotch pedlar in the coppice behind the house, the country people have had a dread of the place. It was once the prettiest cottage in the whole neighbourhood."

Ruth and her husband were standing together at the gate of their cottage garden, and looking out over the wide heath before them. It was the evening of the day of hallowed rest. James drew his wife's hand, which rested lightly on his arm, more closely to him, and looking tenderly in her face, he said,

"I am beginning to think that you are right in all your ways, my own dear gentle Ruth; you do certainly seem the most happy, cheerful creature, I ever met with. To say the truth, I expected to

get a lecture from you very often about one thing or another; but I loved you so well, that I made up my mind to bear the lecture, so that I could have you for my wife. Here have we been married nigh upon two months, and instead of going moping about the house, and finding fault with everything and every one, as they told me you would, you always meet me with a smile, and if you wish to advise me for my good, why, Ruth dear, you win me to love the advice for the giver's sake."

One evening, nearly a year after their marriage, James came in at least two hours later than his usual time of returning home. His face was flushed, and there was a sullen cloud upon his brow, such as Ruth had almost forgotten, she had not seen it there for so very long a time. Ruth was wise enough not to notice his changed looks till she had tried to find out from what cause they came.

"Weren't you talking to some one, James," she said, "at the garden gate? I thought I heard another voice besides yours."—"What, you listened," he replied, "to hear what we were saying?" The harsh unkindness of her husband's voice, and the quick suspicious glance at her from his scowling brow, made Ruth start. She felt as if she could have wept, but she did not give way to her wounded feelings, but answered sweetly, "No, dear husband, I did not listen; one may hear

without listening; and I was going to say, if you had a friend with you, why would you not ask him in?"—"It was Watson," replied James: and Ruth said no more about his companion at the gate; for James had often told her that Watson was a bad man, and one of his worst and most dangerous associates in times past. "Where do you think I have been, Ruth?" he said, laughing at the same time, and trying to look careless as to the effect of what he had to tell upon her. Ruth could not guess, but she named one or two places. "O no," he cried, laughing again, "to a far merrier place than any of those. To the new beer shop, old girl: your father's and my mother's beer-shop—the sign of the Fox."

Ruth could not command her feelings now. She had never heard any rumour of a beer-shop before: she had not the most distant idea that her parents had intended to open one; they had, in fact, kept their plan a secret from her, fearing that she might trouble herself and them by trying to persuade them to change their intention. "This, indeed, is bad news!" she said to herself, clasping her hands, and heaving a long heavy sigh.—"Why child, what's the matter now?" said James; "where's the sin of selling a little good beer? 'Tis a thriving trade, depend upon it; and what is it to thee if the old people make a little more money to leave us. You know my mother brought your father a good bit of money that old grandmother

Giles left her; and why should they not try to turn it into more, by turning an honest penny at the sign of the Fox? They would have set up a public-house long ago, only the Squire and the Rector never would let them have a licence; but this beer-shop Bill is a rare good thing for the poor; there is nobody to be asked but the excise-man, and when the money is put down to him for the licence, then one need not give one's self any further trouble, nor care for any thing but getting plenty of customers to drink away and spend their money and their time merrily, you know." Notwithstanding this bantering, Ruth could not help looking with concern at her husband's disturbed countenance. Seeing that she persisted in her inquisitive glances, he at length said,

"I'll tell you what put me out of sorts this evening. I thought I had a good bit of news to tell you, and 'tis all come to nothing. I spoke for the under game-keeper's place at the Hall some days ago, and I saw the Squire himself about it this evening. He has given it to Joe Ward; and he told me that he would not have given it to me on no account whatsoever."—"He was quite right," said Ruth; "I would not have had you take the place on any account. It might have been to you a snare to idleness and crime."—"And I suppose it wont be then the same," said he, "to Joe Ward?"—"I think it will not," replied Ruth. James rose up, and stamping with fury on the

ground, cursed Joe Ward, and looked with a full and furious stare in Ruth's face. "You like that fool better than you do me; I always said you did."—"You never thought so, James," she answered; "you know that I refused to marry him before you made your first offer to me; you know that I have steadily refused him always; but James," she added, "are things come suddenly to such a pass, that you will not bear to let your wife, your own true wife, do justice to a friend, and speak the truth to her husband?" James made no answer, but went upstairs to bed. Ruth turned away from the supper she had prepared for her husband; she had no inclination to taste it. She felt, however, the need of spiritual support, and as she opened her Bible, she meekly blessed God in her heart, that he had given her a hungering and thirsting after His Holy Word. The next morning James told his wife that he had been overcome with liquor when he came in from the Fox, and he agreed with her that it was for his real good that he was not hired to take the under gamekeeper's place. He begged Ruth to forgive his brutal words about Joe Ward, and he went to his work with fresh promises on his lips.

The church doors were thrown open, and the congregation began to pour forth from the porch. Three or four men rather rushed, than walked forward, before the rest. As soon as they had passed the gate of the churchyard, they turned the

corner of the village street with rapid steps; an opposite door was already wide open; they entered before another person had reached the corner, and were soon seated quietly in the little inner parlour of the public-house. James Carter was one of these men: his old and vicious companion, Watson, was another. Ruth was not at church; she had become only two days before the mother of a little boy. Her husband had promised to return home immediately after church to sit with her. She watched the last glow of the setting sun through her casement. When he came in, Ruth asked no questions: his voice was unsteady, and his face flushed; and as he bent down to kiss her before he bade her 'good night,' she perceived by his breath that he had been drinking again. The next morning, when James went to his work, he said nothing of his visit to the public-house the evening before.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a cold dreary night in December. Ruth was startled from a sound but heavy sleep, by the sudden cry of her baby. The little fellow had awoke very hungry, and it seemed as if he would not be pacified till he had roused up his mother to satisfy his cry. Ruth sat up in bed to suckle her child. The night was dark and the wind was rising, and as she sat in the deep quietness of midnight, she blessed God for the shelter and warmth which she enjoyed. The report of a gun, seemingly at no great distance from the house, was heard. Again, after a short space of time, another shot, and yet another, and then Ruth distinguished the sound of voices, and the barking of dogs, and again the report of guns. — "Dear James," she whispered, "do listen, and tell me what is the matter!"—James did not answer; again she spoke, and as she did so, she put forth her hand to touch him. There was no head upon the pillow. He who had been sleeping by her side was gone. She

rose up and went to the window. Nothing was to be seen in the dark night. Every sound also had died away, and as she stole down stairs the loud clicking of the clock alone broke upon the profound stillness. In a loud whisper she again called her husband, but received no answer. The key was gone from the back door, but both the doors were fast locked. Ruth returned to her chamber, shivering with cold and fright. She lay down again, but could not sleep. At last a footstep was heard beneath the window, the key turned in the lock of the back door, and James having slipped off his shoes, came softly up the stairs. Ruth sat up as he entered the room. "James," she said, in a calm low voice, "there has been a fight between the poachers and the keepers, has there not?"—"Well," he replied, "what if there has?"—"And you, James, have been among the poachers?"—"Perhaps I have been."—"Has there been bloodshed, James? tell me—I must know."—"Why, what a child you are," he replied, and laughed. "No one has been hurt; only one of the dogs got peppered a little with shot. I hear him now howling and moaning, a brute as he is—just such another brute as his master."—"His master?" said Ruth, inquiringly.—"Yes, his master, Joe Ward; 'tis the great outlandish puppy that he has had following him about for the last year. A savage brute! he tracked me all round the heath, when I got away from the keepers; but I've done his business

for him."—"What do you mean, James?" she cried out in a voice of much emotion. "What have you done to the poor beast? I hear him howling now — what a piteous moan he makes!" —"I have only stopped his wandering habits," he said, "and given him a lesson which he won't live to remember (but he is learning it now), not to follow me. I've just run a stake through him, and pinned him to the ground, for Mr. Joe to find him easily in the morning."—"O James, James!" she cried, "what devilish cruelty!" and she burst into an agony of tears.—"Why, woman, what are you about?" he said, finding that Ruth had risen up, and was hurrying on her clothes.—"I'm going," she said, "at all risks to do what I can to save that poor tortured dog. Cruel, wicked man! let me go!" she added, as he threw his arms forcibly around her. "Nay, nay, husband, forgive me those words; I don't know what I'm saying."— "Ah, well! lie down, and I'll go at once," said James; "and at your desire I'll do my best for the brute." He hastened down stairs, and in half an hour he returned. "The poor beast is out of his misery," he said; "it was nonsense to think he could live, so I just knocked him on the head, and dug a hole, and buried him in the sand. You don't speak, Ruth," he said, as he lay down beside her. Ruth did not speak; her heart was full of grief, her pillow was wet with her fast-flowing tears.

Ruth had a difficult way before her. She could not forget that James was her husband; but she had a higher word to regard than even his — the word of God. One evening he came into the house with a bag upon his shoulder; she knew not how far he had brought it, but he tossed it lightly on the table, and throwing himself down on his chair, bade his wife to look into the bag, and cook him a hot supper from what she found there. — "Not those pheasants," replied Ruth, "nor game of any kind," and she put the birds which she had taken out back into the bag. "My husband," said she, "I will pay you a willing and delighted obedience in every thing and at all times, except when I am forbidden by the word of God to do so. I know well enough that the husband is the head of the wife, and that wives are called upon to be subject to their husbands in every thing which the Lord our God allows. The rule indeed which the wife must observe is this — the rule of godliness and holiness: 'As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in every thing.' Do not ask me to do what I know to be wrong, for I cannot obey you.—You are angry with me. I felt that you would be when I made up my mind to speak; but I tell you again and again, that you must not, dear James, indeed you must not, bring home hares, or pheasants, or any other game. If the words displease you, I do not say '*I will not*,' but I must not, dare not dress them for you, or eat

them with you.—It is written in God's Bible that sin is the transgression of the law.—Dear James, he also commits sin who breaks the law of the land, at least, he has no right to look to the law of the land for the protection of his property, if he has no scruple in breaking that law."

"But the hares and the pheasants are as much ours as the squire's," said James; "and when a poor man and his family are in want, have the great folks of the land any right to deny him a brace of birds, and to send him to prison if he helps himself to them now and then."—"We need only talk of what concerns ourselves, James," said Ruth, mildly. "We were not in want till you took to these unlawful ways. Don't talk, then, of our being in want, as your excuse. You were always in regular work, and went regularly to your work, till you took to turning night into day, and lying in bed half the morning after the fatigue of a sleepless night.—I have heard my own poor mother say, that the worst of poaching is, that it is almost sure to lead to thieving. After a while a man gets out of the habit of going to an honest hard day's work, and when there are no hares to be had, perhaps he and his idle companions reason themselves into taking a sheep; and he that robs in a field soon scruples not to break open an outbuilding, and steal a sack of corn. Then he gets bold in crime, and says to himself, 'It can't be a greater sin to take money than to take corn, and I should not

take it if I did not want it; if such a farmer or such a gentleman is coming home from market or from his banker, why should he not give me some of his money? sure he does not want it so badly as I do;' or with the same sort of wicked excuse to himself, he breaks open a dwelling-house in the dead of the night, and gropes his way up to the master's chamber: if he finds him asleep, and if he finds his gold without much of a search, he robs him while he sleeps, but if the master stirs or offers resistance, the robber says, 'Why do I let him have it in his power to hang me; so if he does not then strike a blow which may be a death-blow, the next robbery he commits, he takes fire-arms, and uses them, and thus robbery goes hand in hand with murder."

The words of Ruth to her husband were but as idle words, for he heeded them not.

CHAPTER IV.

"THIS is weary work!" said Ruth to herself, and laid down her sewing; "I only *meither** myself with my own thoughts, while I go on thinking them over and over, I get deeper and deeper into the tangles of them." She took up the light and went into the chamber where her little boy was locked fast in sweet sleep; the gentle sound of his healthy and regular breathing (for the door stood partly open) drew her thither. "I must not trouble his eyes with the flare of the candle," she said, "but I must look upon his innocent face;" so she put the candle upon the high chest of drawers, and sat down by the bed-side. The child was, in his features, strikingly like his father, but there was not the same bad spirit within to darken the tenement.

The evening had closed in black and stormy after a dismal day, but soon after midnight, the

* Perplex.

sharp cold east wind died away, and the air became warm and mild, and suited to the pleasant season of the year. Ruth perceived the change with delight, as gently unclosing the door, she stood in the little garden in front of the cottage, and listened for some sound of her husband's return. The softness of the air, and the sweet scent of the hawthorn and woodbine which came every now and then stealing upon it, tempted her to walk on to the little garden gate which opened upon the heath, and there she stood in deep thoughtfulness, unable, indeed, to shake off the weight of thought that oppressed her.

How happy she and her husband might have been together; how contented he had once seemed in their lowly cottage! His wages had never been high, but what with the garden, and the cow, and the pig, and the small sums she was able to earn, the rent had always been paid, and want had never been known. Things were sadly changed now; he scarcely ever brought her home any money for house-keeping, and the cow had been sold to pay the rent, and that year she could not afford to buy a pig. She had set the potatoes with her own hands, and managed to keep the whole garden in a sort of rough order; but another year, if James went on as he did, she could not tell how they were to live; and yet it would not do to think of the future; she had been thinking in too distrustful a spirit all the evening. Her duty—and so she had

tried to remind herself, only she fell back so often into the same train of thought,—her duty was to attend to calls of the present day, and to leave every event to God. She knew who had forbidden her to take any anxious thought for the morrow, and she felt that sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof.

It was not, indeed, Ruth's disposition to look to the dark side of a subject, but to meet the trials of the present day resolutely, and to hope that on the morrow, the dismal prospect would clear up; but alas! memory came, and whispered how often she had hoped and been cruelly disappointed. It was at that very garden-gate she had stood with James, and his words had promised so fair, and he had seemed so convinced that the ways of godliness were those of pleasantness and peace.

The sweet breath of the woodbine and the hawthorn had that evening scented the air, and as they stood in peaceful silence, her hand drawn within his arm, they had listened together to the few gentle sounds which seemed to be born of quietness; the rippling gurgle of the brook in the green meadow under the copse wood behind the house, and the shivering rustle of the aspen leaves, and every now and then the bleat of a lamb, faint from its distance, in the uplands. Another sound now broke upon the stillness of the night. As Ruth leaned forward over the gate to hear more distinctly, she heard the light rumbling of a cart upon the

road of level greensward, and then the splashing of the horse's feet as the cart crossed over the little brook. The road was heavy with a deep sand from the brook to the cottage, and Ruth could hear the panting and straining of the horse as his drivers urged him onward. The cart came nearer, and she heard her husband's voice; her first impulse was to rush forward and welcome him; she hesitated for a moment, and afterwards she was glad she had done so, for a voice, which she felt sickened to hear, the voice of Watson (she had lately learned to know his voice), replied to James. The cart stopped suddenly at a short distance from the gate;—a conversation took place, every word of which was heard by Ruth;—some one jumped out of the cart; before, however, the man could reach the gate, Ruth had fled back, unheard and unseen, to the cottage. She had entered, she had locked and bolted the door before any other person had approached it. In a few minutes a knocking was heard, not at the front door, but on the other side of the house; the cart had come round to the side gate, and James stood calling and knocking at the back door for instant admittance. Ruth did not rise up from the place on which she had sunk down.

"What is to be done?" was the question she put to herself: the answer instantly returned was, "the thing that is right, the right, and nothing but the right. I will feel certain," she said, in her low but earnest prayer, "that Thou, O Lord! art

standing by my side, as certainly standing by my side as if I could see Thee with mine eyes, and hear thy voice speaking to mine ear, and feel the support of thine arm a very present help in time of trouble, for thou hast said, I will not leave you comfortless. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; I can therefore do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." She crept very softly up stairs, and taking the candle in her hand, she came down, and then in faith and confidence she opened the door at the bidding of her husband: the light trembled in her hand, but calmness and determination sat upon her countenance. "Stand aside, Ruth, dear," were James's first words, "while we lift these sacks into the house." He started with astonishment at the tone and manner of Ruth; she did not move, but said in a voice of resolute decision, "Nothing can be brought into this house, in this secret manner at this hour of the night, unless I know what you are bringing, and whence you have brought it."—"The goods are ours, Ruth," said James, impatiently, "and is not that enough? They belong to me and my companions."—"If they were honestly got, there can be no secret about them," said Ruth.—"Come, come, Ruth," said James, "have done with this folly, and let us pass. What are all these questions for?" and then another voice called out, "Ask no questions, and I'll tell you no lies."—"I may answer your saying with a wiser proverb," replied Ruth, with

a gentle, but most resolute seriousness of manner; "The receiver is as bad as the thief." There was a pause: the party drew back at her words. Just then the clock of the house struck twelve. The men again came forward, and with a deep and angry voice, James Carter, coming close to his wife, said, "I'll have no more of this fooling, Ruth. Out of the way with you. What do you stand before the door for in this obstinate temper? The goods shall be brought in without another word." "Never, never," said Ruth, and firmly grasping the door-post with one hand, she put the candle on the stairs behind her, and then grasped the opposite door-post also. "Bring in your stolen goods," she said, "but you must first strike me dead if you do." "Pack o' nonsense, wench!" said James, gently, but forcibly striving to remove her hands from the door posts. He found that, strong as he was, she was not to be mastered so easily as he had supposed. He still struggled, and she still resisted. Then he cursed her, grinding his teeth with rage. Ruth felt as if the blood had suddenly curdled at her very heart. "Hear me once, only once," she cried. "If you will let go the door," he shouted. She did not let go the door, and the brute struck her. Ruth fell to the ground; but it was across the door-way that she fell; and instantly recovering herself, she raised herself on her knees, and when her husband seeming still in anger, would have lifted her away to let the men

enter; she still resisted, but he felt her soft kisses on his hand; and in a moment afterwards, she pleaded with him, in a voice so piteous and so tender, that his hard heart began to yield — she felt that he was softened, for the hands with which he still held her shook violently. She seized the opportunity which seemed to be given her, and rising up at once, and coming forward from the door, she again spoke to him and his companions. "I prayed to be heard a little while ago," she said, "but you would not hear me. Hear me now, and then do what you will. You can overpower me by force, — you can silence me for ever in this world by murdering me — but beware! for perhaps you may have some bloodshed already to answer for — perhaps I already know more than you suspect of what has taken place within the last few hours. Hear me, hear my solemn oath, made before God, who is present with us at this moment, standing by to strengthen me to do what is right, — bring in your goods; but mind my words,—as surely as they have been stolen, so surely, if I live, will I accuse you, one and all, before a magistrate to-morrow, and if not to-morrow, while I live I will never rest till I have brought you, one and all, to justice. I will tell word by word all that has been done and spoken this night; and I have overheard (I will not hide it from you) many words that might hang you. I was standing at the gate of our little garden, watching for my husband's return, when the

cart drove up. I heard every word, though my heart was well nigh breaking. I did not stir, for I feared to be discovered, though I stood behind the high dark hedge. The moon was shining so brightly, that you would have seen me had I moved. I wonder you did not see me when I fled back to the house. I have told you enough, and my life is in your hands, and I almost think I would rather die at once than outlive this dreadful night. Still, if you go away, and go at once, your secret is safe, I will not betray you." —— They went away — all of them—even James; and Ruth was left alone.

Day-light was just dawning when James returned home. Ruth guessed that he had been in a violent scuffle during the night, for she now saw, what she had not noticed before, that one sleeve of his coat was quite torn off. "Never mind the coat," he said, as Ruth began to question him, "but look out over the heath." Ruth was speechless for a while with terror, as looking from the window she saw the flames of a raging fire spreading and mounting into the sky, and rolling up huge volumes of smoke. "I have watched it from below," said James, "for the last hour, and the first thing I saw was a red spot or two, and a thick smoke in what seemed to me to be old Brown's rickyard, but the fire seems to have broken out now in the out-buildings also, and it has spread to the dwelling-house, if I'm not mistaken; for I

see the old stack of chimneys rising up, and looking black in the midst of the flames." "How very dreadful!" cried Ruth, as the flare of the fire filled the whole room with a stronger light than that of the pale and dawning day. It even woke the infant, as it glared in his face, and he lay with his eyes wide open staring at the red light. "Oh! James," cried Ruth, returning to the window, "the people are running backwards and forwards like distracted creatures. James, I pray God that you and your wicked companions have had nothing to do with this dreadful crime; but I fear that you have all been deep in the robbery and the burning of this awful night." She did not tell him what she had heard when watching for his return at the garden gate. The few words that had there fallen upon her ear made her more than suspect, when the fire burst out, where he and his wretched gang had been that night. What happened on the afternoon of that day, confirmed her suspicions. Ruth was baking her batch of bread for the week's use, when a party of constables, and the squire's eldest son at their head, came to search the house. Ruth was at first so terrified that all strength and nerve seemed to forsake her, and she almost fell to the ground. With a strong effort of prayer and exertion, she called up her presence of mind, and went through the trial with a calmness and self-possession that astonished herself. She felt, however, that though innocent herself, the master of the house, of which

she was mistress, was deep in crime. She could not betray him, but while the secret was locked up in her heart, she felt loaded with the guilt and shame of the sin, if not with the sin itself.

Bessy came to see her that evening, and told her, with blushes of shame upon her honest face, that it was supposed that James and Watson had been concerned in the robbery and the murder which had been committed the night before, as well as in the fire which had consumed all the stacks in farmer Brown's yard: the cattle and most of the out-buildings had also been destroyed, and all the old part of the farm-house burnt to the ground." "But the murder," said Ruth, "tell me about the murder, Bessy. All the rest is bad, but the murder is worst of all." The murder was supposed to have been committed, Bessy had heard, owing to the violent resistance made by Joe Ward. "By whom?" said Ruth, scarcely able to get out the words. "By Joe Ward," repeated Bessy. "He was to have been married to Mr. Brown's orphan niece next week, and he was sleeping in the house when the robbers broke in. It seems that an attack had been made upon the premises about a week ago, and Joe Ward offered to come and sleep at the farm as a guard. "This is bad news enough, is it not?" said Bessy, "and that beer-shop, Ruth,—I may say it to you, now there is nobody near to overhear us,—that beer-shop,—father and mother's beer-shop,—is said to

be the place where the gang have met for the last few months."

As Bessy was taking her leave of Ruth, James Carter came in. Ruth felt her heart sink within her when she saw him gay and smiling, as if nothing had happened. They were no sooner left alone than he told her she was the best wife in the world; that it was all owing to her that they had not been found out, for had the stolen goods been found on their premises, it would have been all over with him. "I thought," he said, "and so did we all, that we could not have brought the things to a better place than this; for all round the country the people are afraid to come near the house because of the murder of the Scotch pedler, years ago, and I knew that no one would follow us here of a night, just out of curiosity." The joy and confidence of James Carter did not last long. Other circumstances had come to light, of which he was not aware, and the next morning he and the rest of the gang were taken up, carried before a magistrate, and committed by him to prison to take their trial at the next assizes. The officers of justice came to the cottage to seize James, but he was found at the Fox, his mother's beer-shop, drinking with Watson and another of his bad associates.

CHAPTER VIII.

The assizes were to be held in a few weeks after James Carter and the rest of the gang had been committed to prison; and James had been scarcely a week in jail, when his wife, leaving her little boy in the joint care of Margery and Margaret, walked to Chester to see him. She found him looking pale and wasted, and the affection and gratitude which he showed towards her, affected her deeply. He attended to all she said to him when she spoke of his sin in the eyes of God; and after assuring her solemnly that he had had no hand in the murder of Joe Ward, he entreated her to leave no means untried of getting him off. Ruth felt that she was too ignorant of law affairs, and too powerless to be of use to him, but she promised to employ counsel, and to do all in her power to help him. As she was returning home, almost overcome by the fatigue of her long journey, for she had walked more than thirty miles since day-break, she met

the village school-master of Poynscourt taking his evening walk. He found Ruth sitting upon the rocky brow of a hill, over which the path led from Poynscourt to the Chester road. She had been the best and the most intelligent girl in Mr. Hughes's school, and few persons felt more grieved for Ruth than her old school-master. He sat down beside her upon the rocks, and listened to her account of her visit to her husband in the jail, and of all that James had said to entreat her to leave no way untried to save him. Mr. Hughes told her of what she had not been before aware, that when the prisoners had been committed none of the witnesses had sworn to the person of her husband; and he bade her remember this.

James did not fail to use all the means in his own power to create an interest for himself: he not only wrote to his mother to advance some money towards employing counsel for him, but he sent this letter to Mr. Vaughan :—

" Rev. Sir, i hop you wil cum and help me to git out of this horrid plas. i no that i as given them as luvs me a dele of grif, and mi ways hav been like other yung fellers in regard of swaring and runnin wilde and sich loik, and i ave bin a bit of a pocher chance times, and otherwise bad, but we are not our own keepers, and I hav bin lik many a poor yung cratur led a stray bi bad compani, but hi ham cum to se mi folle, an menes to

lede a nu life if unce I gits hout of this plac. I can tak my oth that I never seed Jim Watson, nor anny of is gang all that blessed nite, but was saf at ome, has mi por dere wife can tel you, and she alwase spiks the truth has you no ful well. praps ther is them at larg who are as bad as me, and far worser, only they hav more larning and a pocket ful of munnee, an so fokes feres to middle with them. pray, sir, cum and se me before mi trial, and giv a luk to the por missis and my sweat babe. O my poor sole, what wil becum of me if they goes to tak my life. there is them as noes that hi am as inocent has the babe unborn.

So no more from

The jail of Chester. your servant,

JAMES CARTER."

The person whom James had employed to write the above letter was evidently no scholar. The next letter he sent was well spelt, and written in a good flowing hand, but it was like too many letters from the prisoners in a jail, written by one among them, in a far more awful state than any there, by a poor deceiving and deceived wretch, familiar with all the mere cant of religion. It would answer no good purpose to let such a letter be made public in any way. Mr. Vaughan went to see James and the other prisoners before their trial. He was also present at the trial. The first person

he saw before him in the crowd that attended in the courts to witness the trial was Ruth; she was standing close to the iron railing which surrounded the prisoners.

The trial began, but when the counsel for the prisoner James Carter was called, Ruth saw at once that some mistake had been made. Mr. Townshend, the barrister, to whom she had not failed to mention the fact which Mr. Hughes, the schoolmaster, had bade her remember, was not there; he was not even in court. A much younger gentleman, whose countenance was certainly not remarkable for intelligence, rose up to undertake the defence. Ruth could never discover how the mistake had been made, or how it was that the defence had been handed over to Mr. Carpenter, the younger barrister. When the witnesses were called to give their evidence against the prisoners, Ruth heard with dismay that her husband was also sworn to. She felt quite certain as to the fact which the schoolmaster, who had, he told her, been present at the examination of the prisoners, had mentioned. Could nothing be done? could she do nothing? Why should she not speak out in the court, and tell the judge the fact? But was there not a more certain and regular way of proceeding? Just then the governor of the jail, who had been standing in one of the lobbies, went out of the court by a door close to the spot where she was standing. Without a moment's

hesitation she determined what she would do. She pushed herself with difficulty through the crowd, and she had scarcely got out, when she saw the governor of the jail. His hand was upon the lock of the door, which he was about to open to return into the court. She had before consulted with him, and he had spoken with great kindness to her. He now listened to her with attention, took her to a room, placed paper, pens and ink, before her, and in less than five minutes after she had left the court, the little slip of paper on which she had written down the fact which the schoolmaster had communicated to her, was handed on the long white wand of one of the attendants to her husband's counsel. She was unable to push her way back into court, through the closely-packed and suffocating crowd; but in less than an hour, while she was standing in the front of the town-hall, to her utter amazement, her husband stood beside her. The other prisoners had been condemned; he alone had been acquitted.* His counsel had followed up the information conveyed to him by Ruth's slip of paper—the witnesses had been cross-examined very skilfully; and when the judge came to sum up the evidence, he had pointed out to the jury the fact,

* If the probability of the above relation should be questioned, the author begs to mention that the same circumstance occurred in his presence; the only difference was, that the brother, and not the wife, of the prisoner, turned the scale.

that it was extremely doubtful whether the younger prisoner had been sworn to on the day of his committal, when the first depositions of the witnesses had been taken down. James Carter had been tried by the law of the land, by a just judge and jury, and he was allowed to receive the full benefit of the law.

CHAPTER IX.

Ruth was not backward to use all the means in her power to impress upon her husband the awful state in which he was still placed before his God. She had no doubt of his being deeply implicated in the events of that fearful night, though she tried to persuade herself that he spoke the truth, when he protested, as he did over and over again, and as he had done before, that in the murder he had had no hand. She sought out Mr. Vaughan, and she brought him to the house of a relation of her husband's, the house to which she had gone with him after the trial. It was in one of the low and filthy alleys of Chester that Mr. Vaughan gladly accompanied her; and the first act of the acquitted prisoner was to kneel down with his minister and his faithful wife, and acknowledge his gratitude to the Father of Mercies, for the mercy that had spared him, and given him time for repentance and a change of life; and that night, and for many nights after, it was the prayer of Ruth, that the

Lord her God, who had spared her husband to her, would save his soul alive, to whatever trials it might please him to appoint her, in order to that most blessed end. Her prayer was heard; and she felt that God had taken the matter in hand, according to His own merciful severity. Ruth could never have found it in her heart to choose the way which God used, though she was enabled to bless Him in her heaviest hour of suffering.

James Carter returned to his own house with his wife; Watson and the other prisoners were left for execution. James looked with new feelings of gladness upon the path of fresh greensward leading to his cottage door, and the lightly drooping branches of the birch-trees waving over the porch. He felt almost happy when the little soft arms of his boy were clasped round his neck, and his own fevered lips were pressed to the cool cheek of the child. This gladness, however, this happiness was not to last. The cottage upon the quiet heath, and the common air of health and freedom, when in contrast to the cell of the prison, and the close atmosphere of the town, were enough to fill any bosom with delight; but the delight in James Carter's case was for a very short season. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest." "There is no peace saith my God for the wicked."

Had the wretched man been carried by angels to the garden of Eden, with his unconverted heart, his stinging conscience, it would have been no

Paradise to him. Our first parents were not yet banished from Paradise, when the voice of Him who had been to them the giver of all goodness sounded of terror and condemnation to their ears, and when they hid themselves from that countenance on which they had once gazed with adoring love, it was among the glorious shades of the garden of Eden; the place was still Paradise; the change which had taken place was in themselves alone.

"I know what I shall do, Ruth," said her husband to her, a few evenings after his return; "I shall leave this country, and find work in distant parts, if you will go with me. As for bearing this place now, I cannot. What does it signify to me that I am acquitted, if I cannot hold up my head among my neighbours?" He stole out in the dusk that evening, and Ruth followed him; but though the air was deliciously mild, he complained of the cold, and came back to the cottage shivering. He was, in fact, ill; and though Ruth bethought herself, and questioned him, and endeavoured to find out how he had taken cold, she could not account for his illness: she only knew, and she knew it not before that night, that he was beginning to be seriously ill.

"I shall not be able to do any thing to-morrow," he said, as he went upstairs to bed; "but I must be looking out for some work very soon, unless, dear wife, you will take your baby

and go with me to the other end of the country?" —"Wherever you go," replied Ruth, "wherever you remain, I will not quit you. There, James! lean upon me: how weak you are! I fear you have been ill for some time past without telling me?" If the mind of James had been at ease, Ruth thought he might have soon been well; for his chief complaint seemed to be a kind of nervous weakness. The state of his mind had, indeed, a most remarkable effect upon his bodily frame. Of this she soon saw a strong proof. She had left her husband hoeing a bed of turnips near the little gate of the front garden; it was the first work he attempted to do. His sister Margaret was standing near him, watching the little boy, who was sitting on the greensward path, and filling his lap with daisies. Margaret ran in haste to call Ruth to her husband; and when she came to him she found that he had fallen to the ground, and was lying almost insensible. "I cannot move," he cried; "I cannot move till you have sent that man away! Let me lie here—the hedge hides me! Well, Ruth, don't you see him?—don't you hear him?—send him away." Ruth did hear him. The man was a pedlar of the lowest kind, and he was crying the last dying speech and confession of James Watson, Charles Hack, and others, who had been executed at Chester, on the morning of Monday, the 8th of July, at twelve o'clock in the forenoon, for the

murder of Joseph Ward, &c. &c. Ruth opened the gate, and went to the man, that she might prevent his entering the garden. She bought some stay-laces and some thread of him; and observing that he had only four bills of the last dying speech and confession of the prisoners, hanging over the side of his basket, she bought them also, and having thrown them into the fire, and waited till they were quite consumed, she went to raise her husband, and to tell him what she had done. It was with great difficulty that she supported him to the house, and then he told her he would go to bed, and that he never wished to rise again, till they carried out his body to bury it. Ruth left him in bed, with his aged grandmother, now between eighty and ninety, sitting by his side. She and his sister Margaret had remained at the cottage since his return from Chester.

Ruth went to Mr. Vaughan, to tell him all her troubles, and to ask for his advice. He gave her great comfort, by showing to her that her husband's state of troubled wretchedness was a far more favourable one than cheerfulness or indifference. It seemed to him and so he proved it to her, that his present state was an answer to her prayers that God, for Christ's sake, would save her husband's soul. Mr. Vaughan went back with her, and passed nearly an hour with James Carter, reading to him of that gracious Being who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to re-

pentance; and then praying with him for the pardon sealed with the precious blood, and brought home to the sinner by the Holy Spirit. The faithful pastor was, at the same time, peculiarly careful not to set before the wretched man one hope of comfort upon false grounds. That night Ruth was awakened by the voice of her wretched husband.

"Ruth," he cried aloud, and then in a louder and still louder voice, "Ruth! Ruth!" Ruth awoke with his clay-cold clammy hand upon her face. Hardly knowing what he did, he had put forth his hand to feel if she were indeed by his side. "Ruth! Ruth! will you never awake?"—"I am awake, dear James," she gently answered; "what can I do for you?" "There, there it is," he cried. —"What is it you speak of, James?"—"It is the body heaped up in the corner of the room."

"Try and go to sleep, dear James," said Ruth, appearing not to notice what he had said.—"Sleep! *I* go to sleep! I am awake at last. I shall never sleep again."

"Dear James, you are still in some unpleasant dream."—"I am not dreaming," he cried out; "I am wide awake, and I have seen it twice before, with the face at the window; 'tis Watson looking in and watching me, and I thought they told me he was hanged, and would come after me no more."

It was broad daylight before Ruth succeeded in calming her husband. That morning Mr. Vaughan remained for a considerable time with James Carter. He offered, when he left him, to send a doctor to see him; but the wretched man, though he thanked him, declined seeing any one who could merely do good to his body. "As for my bodily health, sir," he said, "I feel it is all over with me. My heart is broken within me, and those words which you have read to me, 'a wounded spirit who can bear!'—Oh! there never were such true words as those. Will you come to me again to morrow, sir? I shall have something to tell you then."—When Mr. Vaughan was gone, James called his wife to his bed-side, and after he had bade her shut the door, and sit down by him, he said to her, "That was a dreadful lie I told you about the murder of Joe Ward. I *had* the greatest share in the work. I have been all along the worst of the gang, and those poor wicked wretches were none of them so bad as I am; even Watson, that I told you had such power with me to lead me—why he never could have led me if I had not chosen to go along with him in his bad ways. Do you think, Ruth, if he had said to me, 'James Carter, there's a gallows on the common, will you come and hang yourself with me?' that I should have followed his leading, and done his bidding? No, no, wife, 'tis only when we love a sin that we give our consent

to follow the man that would lead us to it. Ruth, dear, I have had a horrible dread of dying, but this morning I think the blessed God has touched my heart, and begun a change within me. I think I could go and give myself up to justice, and suffer, like those other poor creatures, for these wicked sins of mine; not that any suffering on earth can save my soul. Ruth, do you remember that morning when I came in and showed you how my coat sleeve was rent off?—it was not torn, as I said, in the scuffle, but it was so soaked with blood, that I tore it off myself, and I wrapt it up, with the knife in it, and hid it somewhere about the house — for the life of me I cannot tell where. Open the window, Ruth, pray, open the window; I want air." Ruth flew to open the casement, but before she could return to the bed, her husband had fainted away. By degrees he recovered; and when he saw that she was sitting on the bed and supporting him tenderly in her arms, he turned quite round, fixed his large hollow eyes with a look full of affection on her face, and smiled, but with such a wretched smile, that at the sight of it tears streamed down his wife's face.—"Ruth," he said, "since I was a little boy, I have gone on hardening myself in sin and ungodliness. I seemed to be changed just about the time we married; but as you told me then, and told the truth, the love of you had more to do with that change than any love of mine to

God. When we put our hand to one crime, we know not to what we may be led on — we are just giving our hand to the evil one, to be led by him as he will: and he is, you know, the tempter — what power, Ruth, can match with his?"—"None," replied Ruth, "but the power of the grace of God." —James remained silent for several minutes, and then looking at his wife with a fixed and searching stare, he said, "There cannot be any hope for me —how can I tell that God loves me?"—"Do you think that I love you, James?" she said, with the sweetest gentleness.—"Yes, Ruth," he answered, after another pause, his eyes still fixed upon her face, "I am quite sure you love me."—"I do indeed," she replied: "I can even kiss this wicked hand, this hand once wet with the blood of murder," and she pressed the hand which had before been clasped in hers, tenderly to her lips, and then to her bosom. "And what am I? though you think me pure and good,—have I not followed too much the devices and desires of a sinful heart? is there any health in me? The remembrance of my sins is grievous unto me, the burden of them is intolerable. If I, therefore, a sinful creature, can love you so tenderly in spite of all your guilt, what must be the love of Him who did no sin, but yet gave His blood for you?"—Ruth would have said more, but just then a foot was heard upon the stairs, and the voice of Sally Howell, the mother of

James, was heard asking to be admitted. James had not seen her for many months, and he was deeply pained to witness her light and reckless manner, and her gay and showy dress. She sat down on the edge of the bed, and began in a loud and jocular voice to congratulate herself and all the family on her son's acquittal. — "Mother!" said James, "before you speak another word, hear what I have to say to you. Give over that joy of yours, for I was the worst of the gang, and I am going to give myself up to suffer death for that murder, for I was the bloodiest murderer of them all—none hated Joe Ward but me. And now, mother, before I go, listen to my last words, for perhaps you'll never come near me again in my disgrace —you never came once to see me at Chester.— My poor dear mother!" he said, his whole manner changing, "you have a soul to save, and a hard heart that must be broken, if ever you would hope to go to heaven. Mother! you have a deal to answer for as far as regards me — what have you ever done towards bringing me to the Lord through the whole course of my life? You first taught me to make a mock of all the parson's lessons, when he would have taught me for my good—" but here he stopped; Ruth had pressed his hand, and he understood her. "Mother!" he said, "instead of heaping up all this blame upon you, I ought to beg your pardon for my many undutiful ways, when I

knew something of my duty, and yet did every thing to provoke you. I had checks and teachings from within, and I gave no heed to them, so that I'll say no more, but beg you to remember this hour till your dying day, and make your peace with God while you have time."

CHAPTER X.

ACCORDING to his promise, Mr. Vaughan came to James Carter on the following day; and he made to him a full confession of his guilt, and declared his determination to make his confession public, and to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Mr. Vaughan said nothing against his intention to give himself up to justice, but again opened the Bible, and read to him, and prayed with him.

"And now," said he, "you have had a personal experience of this truth, that if it were possible for a sinner to be forgiven without being changed, that is, converted, his forgiveness would profit him but little; his happiness would be wretchedly incomplete, it would be no happiness. You had your acquittal; you came back to your former abode, a free man; and yet you have found, that with a wounded spirit, it was impossible for you to know any real peace. You have, indeed, cause to bless God that He has not suffered you to be more

and more hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin, but that He has opened your eyes, ere it was too late, to its exceeding sinfulness, and to your now lost state. They do not rightly understand the Christian's covenant, or I should say, that blessed agreement, which the Father hath entered into with the Son, to accept all who are in Christ, the mystical vine, as the branch is in the vine, to accept them for their Head's sake, that is, for Christ's sake. They do not rightly understand that covenant, who suppose that Jesus saves from the curse alone, and not from sin also, which is the cause of the curse. 'His name was called Jesus, for he should save His people from their sins.' And for this cause the Son of God was manifested, not only to take away our sins, but that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Mr. Vaughan had scarcely passed through the garden-gate, after he had left the chamber of the sick man, when the casement was thrown open, and he heard the voice of Ruth, entreating him to return. He came back, and found that a dreadful change had suddenly taken place in the wretched man. He saw, indeed, that he was even then in the agonies of death; and he did not quit the gentle, patient Ruth, till all was over.

"I am brought low indeed," said Ruth, and she sat for awhile quite lost in thought, her spinning wheel stopt, and her hand dropt listless by her side. At last these words came over her mind, and stole

from her lips, and quiet tears trickled down her face—

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride."

"And how does it go on," she said to herself.

"He that is humble, ever shall—"

And she repeated the words "ever shall," and lifting up her eyes, turned them with a smile of gratitude towards heaven—

"——————— ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

"Thank God, this is true, I know the truth of it, I feel its comfort—ungrateful that I am, I never should have been brought so near to Him, had He not forced me so graciously to live loose from the earth, and forbidden me to look even to those I loved best on earth for comfort. He sent my trials to make me love Him and so love life; and I can say, oh Lord, I can say to Thee, Thou art all sufficient." She was here interrupted by the entrance of her father and step-mother. They were both astonished to find her looking so calm the day after the funeral, and still more astonished to find her at work; for she had set her spinning going, as they entered the room.—"Dear me," said Sally, looking down at the basket full of balls of hemp, "what can make you trouble yourself as you do about this kind of work? Why, you can buy sheets and other linen a deal cheaper at any shop than you

can spin them."—"It was my mother's way," said Ruth, smiling faintly; 'she spun all the linen in the house, and I have followed her example. I sow the hemp, and beat it, and spin it, and old Owen weaves it for me: and though you may pay a less price for your linen at the shop, nothing wears so well as that which is home-spun. I have often felt that my poor mother was right when she bade me go on spinning, if it was only to keep my hands from idleness; and now, even in my sorrow, I feel the benefit of not having idle hands."—"Ah well, my dear wench," said Sally, "I don't know what is to become of you and your babe; your poor father and I have had our notice to quit the beer-shop, and a dead loss we shall make of it. We think of going to Manchester, in the course of a week, for I have friends there who feel a great respect for me, and I shall be glad to go, for I never did like a country life. I am sure we shall be sorry to leave you and your babe to the parish; but how can we help it?"—And Sally went on, positively worrying Ruth with with her dismal forebodings, till at last the poor young widow could bear it no longer, but wept aloud. She soon, however, recovered herself, and said with sweet and cheerful calmness; "You have told me, mother, what man would say of the desolate widow and the orphan. I will tell you what God himself has said, and I believe His word, and can trust Him with all my heart and soul. His word is this—

'Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.'"

Two days before the departure of Sally and her husband for Manchester, Ruth received a visit at her cottage, which made her feel perfectly happy. Miss Poynscourt's little carriage stopped at her garden gate. Mrs. Vaughan and Miss Poynscourt were in it, and they came to tell Ruth that she must come and live near them; that the dairy house should be hers, and that the place of dairy-woman, which her own poor mother had filled, was at her service. They came to tell her also, that old Margery must come with her; and that Miss Poynscourt had already agreed to take Margaret, Ruth's sister-in-law, to wait upon old Mrs. Martin, the housekeeper, who was now quite infirm, and who wanted a companion who would be gentle and willing to act under her direction.

One more trial remained for the young widow. When about to move her goods from the cottage, and cleaning up every part of the premises, as she did with the most scrupulous neatness, she found over the roof of the oven a small bundle of dark cloth. At first she could not imagine what it was, and she called to old Margery to come and look at it. The old woman, who was now almost totally deaf, did not hear her, and Ruth was indeed rejoiced that she did not; as she unrolled the parcel, which seemed glued up in places, a large clasped

knife fell at her feet, and she saw with horror that she had found the blood-stained sleeve and knife of the murderer. Her first impulse was to give way to her natural feelings of grief and terror, for all the old wounds of her heart seemed opened afresh; but after she had effectually destroyed the dreadful witness to her husband's crime, she blessed God that she, and no one but herself, had been permitted to find that sleeve and knife.

On that very evening, leading her child with one hand, and carrying her Bible in the other, she left, for the last time, the cottage on the heath. Old Margery had gone to the dairy-house, with Margaret for her attendant, some hours before.

THE END.

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